

**Niagara Falls 1901-1911: Immigration, Industrialization and the Creation
of an Ethnically Diverse City**

Timothy (Roger) Fast

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Carmela Patrias, Faculty Advisor

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Abstract

At the turn of the twentieth century, hydroelectric power development along the Niagara River rapidly transformed the Town and Village of Niagara Falls, Ontario into an industrial city. The community changed demographically as well, with large numbers of foreign immigrants arriving to work both on the massive construction projects and in the factories which were drawn to the area due to the availability of inexpensive power. In 1891, the area later incorporated into the City of Niagara Falls was overwhelmingly composed of inhabitants of British origin, but by 1911 roughly 14% of the residents originated from Southern and Eastern Europe. This paper examines the demographic transformation of Niagara Falls during this time, constructing a profile of the immigrant population using census data from 1891, 1901 and 1911. The census data reveal where distinct ethnic communities were located, as well as their composition, providing a groundwork for further exploration of the integration process of this relatively large number of “foreigners” into the British-Canadian resident population. Some segregation was imposed, as in the case of single male construction labourers, other segregation was voluntary, such as Italian immigrants forming their own distinct neighbourhood. Many Southern and Eastern European immigrants faced racial discrimination in one form or another, from institutions such as the police department, local newspapers and employers, as well as from citizens’ groups such as The Lord’s Day Alliance. This study addresses the relative silence of the historiographical record regarding this influx of new Canadians to this area at the turn of the twentieth century, and the many challenges which they faced.

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INTRODUCTION

The City of Niagara Falls, Ontario, was incorporated January 1, 1904, created by the amalgamation of the Village of Niagara Falls with the Town of Niagara Falls. According to the Census of Canada for 1901, the total population of the Village was 1458, while the neighbouring Town possessed 4244 inhabitants; not a particularly substantial number of people to create a city. The question of amalgamation was debated amongst the residents of the two communities early in 1903, due to the recent hydro-electric development close to the village and town along the Niagara River near the Horseshoe Falls. In a series of articles printed in late February 1903, the local newspaper sided with those in favour of amalgamation, noting that “it would be of great benefit to both the South [Village] and the Town to co-operate with each other in handling the power companies and the many industries that are bound to follow.” The newspaper wholeheartedly supported amalgamation, as it provided the best opportunity “to get the fullest benefit from the era of prosperity now dawning.”¹ The residents of the two settlements were very enthusiastic about electrical power development in the area, as they believed it would inevitably lead to other sorts of development- industrial, residential and most especially commercial. While most locals viewed the construction of the power plants in terms of economic benefit to the area, it was quickly realized that there were a host of other unanticipated issues and consequences which accompanied the initial construction projects and later industrial development of the city.

The townsfolk were correct that electrical development would lead to other kinds of development in the area. When construction began in May of 1901 on the first power facility, that of The Canadian Niagara Power Company, hundreds of workers poured into the area, and

¹ *Welland Tribune*, February 20, 1903; see also *People's Press*, February 23, 1903; *Welland Tribune*, February 27, 1903.

they needed to be fed, clothed and housed. By the time all three power companies were at the peak of construction, there were some 1500 men at work, and the new city, while profiting from the venture, also experienced many new problems which it was unprepared for.² The greatest challenge posed by the construction projects to the townspeople was the rapid increase of “foreigners” in their midst. By April of 1902, the newspaper observed that “The men employed on the power works include Swedes, Hungarians, Polacks, Italians and negroes,” and the next month reported that within the village, “A number of foreigners who are employed on the power works have rented an old house on Ferry Street and taken up their abode there. Residents of that street are greatly disgusted with it.”³ From the Canadian census data, we learn that at the time of the 1901 census, the town, village and surrounding area were comprised overwhelmingly of inhabitants of British descent- English, Irish, Scots or Americans of similar background, and these inhabitants often expressed unease at the rapid influx of foreign workers to the area.⁴ While many of the foreign workers employed on the construction projects were transients or “sojourners”, some of the new arrivals decided to stay in Canada and settled in the City of Niagara Falls, where they became naturalized citizens, built homes and raised families. By the time of the 1911 census, the demographics of the area had changed considerably, with about 13% of those enumerated of “foreign” descent, most notably Italians, Austro-Hungarians and other Eastern Europeans.⁵

The following study is an examination of this process, documenting and describing how the Town and Village of Niagara Falls were transformed in the first decade of the twentieth century into a modern industrialized and ethnically diverse city. Hydro-electric development in

² *The Welland Telegraph*, November 5, 1903.

³ *People's Press*, April 29, 1902, *Welland Tribune*, May 2, 1902.

⁴ See Appendix I.

⁵ See Appendix I.

the immediate vicinity spurred both foreign immigration and industrial development, and the result was the creation of the City of Niagara Falls, Ontario. The transition to an ethnically diverse industrialized city was not accomplished smoothly; it was accompanied by a great deal of public unease expressed in the press, frequent labour disputes and sometimes violence on the jobsites, discrimination expressed by both the courts and the English-Canadian residents toward the recent “foreign” arrivals, and a horrifying number of deaths and permanent injuries suffered by the workers.

This paper initially started out as statistical profile of the inhabitants based upon the census returns of the area for the years 1891, 1901 and 1911, but it soon became apparent that relying upon the census data alone would not be enough to compose a complete picture. When the 1901 census was taken, Canadian Niagara Power had barely started construction, and by 1911 all three power plants were up and running. This census data is very useful, however, providing statistical snapshots of the region’s inhabitants immediately before and after development, bracketing the demographic change that occurred between these years. To find out what happened between 1901 and 1911 was the real challenge. Newspapers, usually a very rich resource for the historical researcher, are unavailable for Niagara Falls before 1908, the newspaper archive for all local papers having apparently been destroyed in a fire long ago. Fortunately, the *Welland Telegraph*, *Welland Tribune* and *People’s Press* all printed news stories of interest gathered from the communities throughout Welland County, and as Niagara Falls was the largest town/city in the County, the Welland papers reprinted many news items originally printed in the Niagara Falls newspapers. Aside from the statistical census data, most of the information contained in this study has been gleaned from these newspapers between the years of 1900 and 1911.

Other primary sources were consulted as well, such as city directories, village, town, township and city voters lists, fire insurance plans, as well as maps and photographs from the archives of The Niagara Falls Public Library and The Niagara Falls History Museum. While much local history has been researched and documented (largely dealing with the War of 1812 or tourism), surprisingly little exists in the way of secondary sources pertaining specifically to Niagara Falls and the rapid influx of immigrants from foreign lands between 1901 and 1911. George A. Seibel, the historian of Niagara Falls *par excellence* has written a few hefty tomes devoted to local history, and his *Niagara Falls, Canada: A History of the City and The World Famous Beauty Spot* published for the Centennial in 1967 remains the standard reference volume for all would-be historians of the area. Seibel's work does include a section devoted to social history and the incorporation and growth of the City at the turn of the century, but it glosses over many points for the sake of readability in a work that is essentially a "popular history".

This present work falls somewhere within the field of statistical analysis, social history and immigration history. The analysis of census data draws on the work of Michael B Katz, Michael Wayne, and Bettina Bradbury.⁶ Wayne's "The Black Population of Canada West" proved especially useful, as he examined the manuscript census of 1861 to de-bunk many myths which had arisen in the historiography regarding Black emigrants from the United States before the Civil War.⁷ Wayne's paper is particularly relevant to the present study, for the Black community of the Village of Niagara Falls represented the largest distinct group of Canadians

⁶ Michael B. Katz, *The People of Hamilton, Canada West: Family and Class in a Mid-Nineteenth-Century City*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1975); Michael Wayne, "The Black Population of Canada West on the Eve of the American Civil War: A Reassessment Based on the Manuscript Census of 1861," in *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s-1960s*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1998), 58-82; Bettina Bradbury, *Working Families: Age, Gender, and Daily Survival in Industrializing Montreal*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1993. See Bibliography.

⁷ Michael Wayne, "The Black Population of Canada West on the Eve of the American Civil War: A Reassessment Based on the Manuscript Census of 1861," in *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s-1960s*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1998), 58-82.

not of British descent living in the area before 1901.⁸ Also, Wayne's study shows that figures reported on the original manuscript census schedules often became scrambled by the clerks responsible for compiling and publishing the official census figures, something the present study finds as well.⁹ Working with the manuscript census is not an exact science, and often it becomes extremely frustrating for the researcher attempting to make sense of the contents.

A more recent analysis of census manuscript data is the 2007 work edited by Eric W. Sager and Peter Baskerville entitled *Household Counts: Canadian Households and Families in 1901*. While this type of work provides analysis of census data on the national level, an in-depth local study such as the one provided by this thesis reveals many shortcomings of the census data that are largely overlooked by broad-based national or regional studies. One chapter of *Household Counts*, written by Bettina Bradbury, does however provide a fascinating insight into the census enumerators themselves and their willingness/unwillingness to poke and pry into delicate subjects pertaining to the people they interviewed.¹⁰ She further describes the "messy range of ideas about race and ethnicity" raised by the categories included in the 1901 census, and observes that the information recorded on the census forms were ultimately interpretations by the enumerators of answers given to them by the respondents. For example, children of mixed-race marriages were categorized by the enumerator as either white, red, black or yellow, the determination apparently left up to the judgement of the census taker.¹¹ Her point can be pressed further, as the "messy range of ideas about race and ethnicity" apply just as much to census

⁸ See Appendix I.

⁹ Wayne, page 59, also page 81 footnote 35.

¹⁰ Bettina Bradbury, "Canadian Children Who Lived with One Parent in 1901," in *Household Counts: Canadian Households and Families in 1901*, eds. Eric W. Sager and Peter Baskerville (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 247-301.

¹¹ Bradbury, *Household Counts*, 256,269,270. See also this paper page 19, footnotes 33 & 34.

takers trying to classify adult foreigners, especially those carelessly and derogatorily labelled “Polaks” in the Niagara Falls census of 1911.

While the use of census data by the historian presents many difficulties, it also provides invaluable information that may not be obtainable from other sources. For example, this study used the 1901 and 1911 census information to determine residential patterns and employment statistics for the foreign immigrants who resided in the area. The 1911 census proved especially valuable in determining the presence of a large number of sojourner labourers in and around Niagara Falls. Often, Canadian studies of foreign sojourner labourers locate them in remote areas; this thesis examines the experience of foreign sojourner labourers in an urban setting. Understanding the sojourner labourer in relation to the large construction projects and relatively urbanized environment of the area provides insight into how and why the immigrant population of Niagara Falls grew and took the form it did by 1911.

Kay Anderson’s work also serves as a guide to this analysis, especially her observation that, “the process of racialization is situated in history and society, not biology and nature.”¹² The long-time African Canadian residents of Niagara Falls, as well as the recent European immigrants were regularly racialized in the workplace and in the press by the British Canadian inhabitants. Historians who deal specifically with the Italian immigrant experience within the Canadian context include John Zucchi and Robert F. Harney. Zucchi’s discussion of the formation of “Little Italy” in Toronto can be compared favourably to a similar creation in Niagara Falls, and Harney’s observations regarding Italian sojourner labourers, the importance of *paesani* and migration chains, as well as the critical role that boarding houses played in the lives

¹² Kay J. Anderson, *Vancouver’s Chinatown: Racial Discourse in Canada, 1875-1980* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991), 6.

of migrant workers are all relevant to the present study.¹³ Harney's works highlight the fact that the sojourner worker's one goal was to lead, "a normal life, i.e., married life, among his own kind, somewhere in the physical world of his *paesani*, where he could make a living."¹⁴ Due to the early establishment of an Italian immigrant community in Niagara Falls, there were more opportunities available earlier for the Italian sojourner labourers to make this dream become a reality than for other groups of migrant workers.

Studies of sojourner labourers employed in Canada at the turn of the twentieth century include work by Donald Avery, Bruno Ramirez and Lillian Petroff, and their contributions inform the discussion of sojourner labourers contained in the present study.¹⁵ In the case of Niagara Falls, it would appear that many migrant workers were initially attracted to the area by the construction jobs available, and then decided to settle; they did not necessarily come to Canada intending to take up permanent residence. As well, a thesis which seeks to examine the place of "foreigners" in Canada at the beginning of the twentieth century should be contextualized with Donald Avery's *Dangerous Foreigners* and James S. Woodsworth's *Strangers Within our Gates*.¹⁶ Woodsworth's 1909 study of Canadian immigration and immigrants, while arguably enlightened for the time, provides a classic definition of English

¹³ John Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto: Development of a National Identity, 1875-1935* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988); Robert F. Harney, "Men without Women: Italian Migrants in Canada, 1885-1930." In *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s-1960s*.ed. Franca Iacovetta (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 206-230. See also Bibliography.

¹⁴ Robert F. Harney, "Men without Women", 222.

¹⁵ Donald Avery, *Reluctant Host: Canada's Response to Immigrant Workers, 1896-1994*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1995; Bruno Ramirez, *On the Move: French-Canadian and Italian Migrants in the North Atlantic Economy*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1990; Lillian Petroff, *Sojourners and Settlers: The Macedonian Community in Toronto to 1940*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995.

¹⁶ Donald Avery, *"Dangerous Foreigners": European Immigrant Workers and Labour Radicalism in Canada, 1896-1932* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1979). J.S. Woodsworth, *Strangers Within Our Gates: or, Coming Canadians* (Toronto: Stephenson, 1909).

Canadians' ideas regarding race and racialization of various immigrant groups settling in Canada at the time. Woodsworth adopted a condescending attitude of paternalistic racism in his book, and it is really quite similar to the tone of the contemporary newspaper reports regarding the foreigners who worked and resided in Niagara Falls. While Avery's foreigners were characterized as dangerous radicals (and foreign labour unrest did take place on the power plant construction sites), other than brief disputes over wages, the foreigners of Niagara Falls never seriously threatened the capitalist *status quo*. What they did have the potential to threaten, however, were morals and public health, and this topic is often discussed in both the Welland and Niagara Falls newspapers before the First World War. The public discussion regarding foreigners, morality and health in Niagara Falls places this study within the larger Canadian debate on the subject, as outlined in Mariana Valverde's *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*.¹⁷ As we shall see, the foreigners' insistence on violating The Lord's Day Act and participating in Sunday drunken revels was considered just as threatening by the press and the public as their predilection towards violence and labour agitation.

This present study draws upon the work of these authors to identify and explain the various forces that were at work in the City of Niagara Falls due to the industrialization process and influx of foreign workers that occurred at the turn of the twentieth century. A combined analysis of local economic development and newspaper accounts reveals the nature and changes of the British Canadian population's response to the presence of racialized minorities in the community. The paper shows that the relatively small number and long presence of the African

¹⁷ Mariana Valverde, *The Age of Light, Soap, and Water: Moral Reform in English Canada, 1885-1925*, (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1991).

Canadian community in the area allowed for their limited acceptance by the larger British Canadian population. While African Canadians were treated with a degree of respect within the community, they nevertheless experienced employment discrimination by residents and continued racialization in the press. Their presence, however, provided a template of sorts to guide British Canadian reaction to the handful of Italian immigrants who arrived in the latter half of the nineteenth century. By and large, this study describes the attitudes and degrees of acceptance the British Canadian residents of the area displayed towards the racialized minorities living within their midst 1900-1911: the long-time African Canadian residents and the Italian and Eastern European immigrants who arrived later. Throughout this paper, the term “foreigner” is used in the sense that the British Canadian inhabitants of Niagara Falls used it at the turn of the twentieth century, to identify immigrants predominantly from Southern and Eastern Europe.

Immigrant workers suffered extreme exploitation at the hands of employers, as evidenced by the high death and injury rates experienced by the workers and frequent labour disputes over wages on the power plant construction sites. Racialization of the foreigners was routine in the press, and discrimination was also commonly experienced by the foreign workers who lived in the area at the hands of the police and the courts. British Canadian residents expressed fears and perceptions regarding the foreigners’ supposed propensity towards labour unrest, drunkenness, violence, immorality and Sabbath-breaking. Stories appeared in the local press which reported the transgressions of the foreigners, often to provide entertainment and a sense of moral superiority for the British Canadian readers. The only expression of minority responses to these types of discrimination and exploitation took the form of protest and law-breaking by the foreigners, in labour strikes and confrontations with the police over liquor and Sabbath law violations. The great power imbalance which existed between the state and the foreign

immigrants invariably resulted in the speedy resolution of such confrontations, usually by the summoning of more police, and in one instance the mobilization of the militia.

The geography of the area also played a role in this story, as the Niagara River provided the location for the power plants, supplied the focus of the tourism industry, and acted as a border between the United States and Canada. Many African Americans and foreign immigrants arrived in the city directly from the U.S. via the railways, and the initial industrial development of the area was largely an American creation. British Canadians, African Canadians, and the Italian and Eastern European immigrants often shared close economic, recreational and personal ties to Niagara Falls New York, and while British Canadians professed a sense of superiority over their American cousins, many attitudes and beliefs regarding those of African or foreign descent were shared by residents on both sides of the border.

Courtesy Niagara Falls History Museum

CHAPTER I- NIAGARA FALLS BEFORE 1901

This chapter provides a brief overview of the Town and Village of Niagara Falls and surrounding area, with the census of 1901 providing a demographic profile of the inhabitants. While largely of British decent, Canadian residents of the area also included two small populations of African Canadians and Italians before 1901. African Canadians had a long history in the area, and were accepted as citizens of the community, but racial prejudice existed which clearly labelled them as “colored” and limited them to specific types of jobs. Italian immigrants were similarly racialized and restricted to “typically Italian” occupations.¹⁸ Not surprisingly, most Italians settled close to the area inhabited by the African Canadian community, on the outskirts of the Town of Niagara Falls. Although they may have been accepted as residents and treated cordially, Italian and African Canadian residents were racialized in the press and by government census officials. They were classified as inherently different from and inferior to the larger British Canadian community.

The area that would later become incorporated into the City of Niagara Falls consisted of the Town of Niagara Falls, the Village of Niagara Falls, and portions of Stamford Township. The Village sprang up around the intersection of Portage Road, Lundy’s Lane and Ferry Street soon after the War of 1812, and was originally named Drummondville. The Town came into being due to the construction of the first bridge across the Niagara River in 1848 (at the present site of the Lower Bridge), and with the coming of the Great Western Railway and construction of a new railway bridge in 1855, the Village of Elgin soon became the town of Clifton. Other railways and bridges followed, and by 1881 the Town of Niagara Falls had grown into a bustling railroad

¹⁸ Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 69.

town and port of entry for commercial goods being imported from the United States and exported from Canada.¹⁹ Farther up river, within sight of the Falls in the area of Clifton Hill and the upper bridge to the United States, tourism became the commercial focus, with numerous hotels and attractions employing the residents who lived in the neighbourhood of “The Centre”. By 1891, the town’s population had grown to 3349, the Village stood at 1179, and the population of the surrounding township of Stamford was 2099 inhabitants.²⁰ While Stamford Township stretched for many miles both north and west, for the purposes of this study, attention is drawn to those areas of the township located within the immediate vicinity of the Town and Village- most especially the area known as Falls View.

In 1891, the Town and Village of Niagara Falls, as well as Stamford Township, were composed almost exclusively of people of British decent and birth. While it is true that there was a sizable minority of inhabitants of German descent and origin, the present study ignores these residents. Settlers of German stock had been arriving in the Niagara area since the end of the American Revolutionary War, and most had become assimilated by and accepted into the dominant British-Canadian society.²¹ According to the manuscript census of 1891, inhabitants of German birth accounted for a very small fraction of the population. While there appeared to be a sizable rural community of ethnic German farmers in Chippawa and Willoughby Township, the enumerators counted 28 people of German birth in the Town, four in the Village, and 15 in Stamford Township.²² In any case, ethnic German peoples were white Northern Europeans, not

¹⁹ George Seibel, Project Co-ordinator, *Niagara Falls, Canada: A History of the City and The World Famous Beauty Spot* (Niagara Falls, Ont. : Kiwanis Club of Stamford, 1967), 36-42, 335-338.

²⁰ *Census of Canada 1890-91*, (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1893), Volume 1, 68.

²¹ Seible, *Niagara Falls, Canada: A History*, 166.

²² See Appendix I. On page 168, Seibel notes, “Niagara Falls did not become the home of any known immigrants from Germany before the turn of the [twentieth] century.” They were indeed here, just not in great numbers.

greatly different than Anglo-Saxons to the Victorian mind, and desirable immigrants from the Canadian point of view.²³

The 1891 census does not provide a breakdown of place of birth for the towns and villages which made up Welland County, but it does provide these statistics for the county as a whole. The census reveals that in 1891 Welland County was comprised of inhabitants who were 79% Canadian born, 6% from Britain and British territories, 5.7% American, 3.9% Irish, 2.5% German, 1.9% Scottish, and 0.5% other.²⁴ As we can see from these figures, the county was very ethnically homogenous, composed predominantly of Canadian-born citizens, or those of British or American birth.²⁵ The census statistics for 1891 were initially included in order to provide a base year to compare census results from 1901 and 1911. While this worked out fine for tallying the totals of those of foreign birth, major difficulties were encountered when attempting to determine anything about the Black community living in the vicinity of Niagara Falls in 1891.

The 1891 census is odd, in that the categories of “Color” or “Race” are nowhere to be found. The manuscript census is actually quite rudimentary for this year; the forms becoming more complex and including more questions as the years progressed. For the researcher attempting to reconstruct the numbers of inhabitants of African descent, this becomes a problem. With no “Race” or “Color” categories, identifying African American/Canadian residents is not easy to do for this year with any degree of accuracy. This may perhaps explain why the

²³ See Woodsworth, pages 82-84. “Even those who detest ‘foreigners’ make an exception of Germans, whom they classify as ‘white people like ourselves’...Of the Germans, as a whole it need hardly be said that they are among our best immigrants...we welcome the German.”

²⁴ See Appendix I.

²⁵ For the 1891 census, I rely upon the “Country or Province of Birth” and “Place of Birth Father” categories to attempt to nail down the ethnic origins of those enumerated. In the case of children born in Canada to those who are clearly immigrant Italian or Eastern European parents, I follow the lead of the census enumerators and classify them as “Italian”, “Austrian” and etc. In cases of ethnically mixed marriages, the 1901 and 1911 censuses usually determined the “race” of the children by the “race” of the father.

historiographical record of the Black community in Niagara Falls around this time is so spotty. If we dig a bit deeper, however, we are able to accomplish a partial reconstruction.

Seible's *Niagara Falls Canada: A History*, in summarizing the history of the Black community of Niagara Falls (in two paragraphs!), makes the claim that "By 1881, there were fifty-four Negroes in Drummondville, mostly former slaves from the United States."²⁶ No footnote is provided, and it is unknown how this figure was determined.²⁷ The problem with this assertion is that it greatly under-represents the size of the Black population of the area and over-represents the presence of former slaves in the community. As Michael Wayne noted in his study of the Black community in London, Ontario during the 1860s, there is a discrepancy between the figures provided by the actual manuscript census records and those tabulated and published as the "official" results.²⁸ One possible reason for this, which becomes glaringly obvious to the researcher dealing with the manuscript census, is the sheer sloppiness and sometimes gross incompetence of the census takers. Some census forms show evidence of being pre-filled, some have been corrected by one or two hands other than that of the enumerator himself, and some are a complete mess of black ink, making a number of forms practically indecipherable.²⁹ Often the enumerators did not follow the instructions laid out by the government, and it was up to officials to sort out the confusion on the manuscript pages and attempt to make some coherent sense out of the statistics for publication.

²⁶ Seibel, *Niagara Falls, Canada: A History*, 171-172.

²⁷ The published volumes of the 1881 census reported those of African descent who lived in the Town of Clifton as nine, Chippawa twenty-four, and the township of Stamford two hundred and eleven. Not one Italian is reported; the white population of the area is monolithically of British origin and descent. *Census of Canada, 1880-1881*, (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, 1881).

²⁸ Wayne, 59, page 81 footnote 35.

²⁹ See Appendix IV, also Evelyn Ruppert, "Infrastructures of Census Taking" in *The Dawn of Canada's Century: Hidden Histories*, Gordon Darroch, ed. (Montreal; Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 51-66.

In any case, an examination of the manuscript census reveals the fact that there was a significantly greater number of people of African descent living in the area of Niagara Falls than was previously assumed. According to the figures published by Wayne, as early as 1861 there were 32 Blacks living in Chippawa, 26 in Clifton, and 190 in Stamford.³⁰ By the time of the 1901 census, when the category “Color” was included on the form, there were 14 Blacks residing in Chippawa, 12 in Stamford, 12 in the Town of Niagara Falls, and 132 living in the Village of Niagara Falls.³¹ By compiling a database of the residents categorized as “Black” in the 1901 census, I worked backward through the 1891 census, comparing the two records and listed those living in 1891 and identified as “Black” in 1901. I also searched for additional sources which would help to distinguish other Black residents of the area around 1891, but was largely unsuccessful.³² For the 1891 reconstruction of the Black community based on these sources, I was able to identify at least 21 Blacks living in Chippawa, 8 in Stamford, 3 in the Town of Niagara Falls, and 92 in the Village of Niagara Falls. It is at best an imperfect estimate, and I am of the opinion that the figure for the Village of Niagara Falls should be considerably higher; perhaps closer to 150 African Canadian residents.

According to the manuscript census, in 1891 the African Canadian population represented the largest ethnic group living in the area of Niagara Falls who were not of British descent. What of the claim that they were “mostly former slaves from the United States”? The manuscript census of 1901 reveals that out of the total of 170 Blacks living in Chippawa, Stamford, and the Town and Village of Niagara Falls, 127 were born in Ontario and 43 were born in the United

³⁰ Wayne, 75.

³¹ “Fourth Census of Canada, 1901,” <<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/1901.aspx>> (May-June, 2015). American forms of spelling were more common at the turn of the century (see below).

³² The Norval Johnson Heritage Centre Collection at the St. Catharines Public Library includes a compilation of William Dalton’s burial records of “colored” residents (see Bibliography), from which I gleaned a few names of Black residents who had died between 1891 and 1901. Throughout this paper, I defer to the Americanized spelling of “color” and other words when included in quotations, as was the accepted practice in the press 1900-1911.

in 1901, and had formed a significant proportion of the population for at least the preceding 40 years. When individual Black households are examined, out of the 44 recorded for the area (Chippawa, Stamford, Village and Town), almost 30% are headed by a female, usually the matriarch of an extended family including children and grandchildren. Most of these women worked to support themselves, and at least five were self-employed as laundresses. Another interesting fact revealed by the census data, one noted by Wayne and that may appear surprising within the context of Victorian ideas of race and social propriety, is the evidence of mixed marriages. From the 1901 data for the area, we find one Italian man married to a Black wife, two Black men married to white women, and three households headed by lone white women with black children/grandchildren.³³ Evidently there was some racial intermingling tolerated by the British Canadian community; to what degree it was accepted remains a mystery, but it is again revealed by the 1911 census.³⁴ As noted, many African Canadian women worked for a living, usually as cooks, domestics or laundresses, with the odd dressmaker, nurse or music teacher reported. Many Black women, as well as men, worked in the tourism industry, being employed as cooks, domestics, waiters/waitresses and bellboys by the many hotels in the town and village.³⁵ African Canadian men found employment as general labourers, farm hands, in the construction trades, or less frequently on the railroads. Some enterprising individuals were self-

³³ In this instance "Color" trumps "Race" in the case of the children. The Italian man's children should, in theory, be categorized as Italian, but they were reported as "African", as their mother was.

³⁴ In the 1911 census, "Chinaman" Harry Chon is reported as being married to an Irish woman, Rebecca. Their three year old daughter was originally entered as Irish for "Race", but was changed to Chinese. Their three month old son, however, was entered as "Irish." Library and Archives Canada, "1911 Census of Canada," <<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1911/Pages/1911.aspx>> (July-August, 2015).

³⁵ African Canadians had been employed in the hospitality industry of the area for decades. See Daniel G. Hill, *The Freedom Seekers: Blacks in Early Canada*, (Agincourt: The Book Society of Canada Limited, 1992), 166-167.

employed as either teamsters or “hack drivers”, providing taxi and sight-seeing services for tourists.³⁶

While these statistical facts provided by the census are informative, they do not provide a very complete picture of the African Canadian inhabitants of the village. By combining the census data with newspaper reports of the “colored” residents of the town and village, as well as other sources, we can learn a few more things. For instance, from the 1891 census we find that Hattie Smith was a 26 year old African Canadian widow, who supported her three children (ages 10, 8 and 4) by working as a hotel cook. Hattie, as well as her two eldest children, could read and write. Mary Jordan was a 61 year old white Irish widow, who lived with her Black daughter and probably granddaughter, and was employed as a washer woman. Catherine Smith was a 50 year old African Canadian widow who lived with her six children and operated her own business as a laundress while her two adult sons worked as farm labourers. As a property owner, Catherine was registered to vote in municipal elections according to the 1889 Village of Niagara Falls voters list. Her laundry business appears to have been successful, employing her one daughter in 1901, her three daughters in 1911, and her business was listed in the 1908, 1911 and 1916 city directories under the heading “Laundries”.³⁷

Perhaps the most well-known “colored” resident of the area at the time was village councilman Burr Plato. Plato was a former escaped slave who, according to his obituary, fled Virginia via the Underground Railroad with four friends, and came to Canada in the early 1850s. Plato initially worked as a farm hand during the day in Stamford Township, tended limekilns at

³⁶ See Appendix II. See also Hill, 172-173.

³⁷ Library and Archives Canada. “1891 Census of Canada” <<http://www.bac.lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1891/Pages/1891.aspx>> (March-April, 2015), “1901 Census of Canada”, *Village of Niagara Falls Voters’ list 1889*, *Vernon’s Niagara Falls City Directory 1908-1909*, Hamilton: Vernon Directories Ltd. 1908.), *Vernon’s Niagara Falls City Directory 1911*, (Hamilton: Vernon Directories Ltd. 1911), *Vernon’s Niagara Falls City Directory 1916*, (Hamilton: Vernon Directories Ltd. 1916).

night, and took classes during the winter months in order to learn how to read and write. Eventually, he saved up enough money to purchase a horse and carriage, and he became a self-employed hackman catering to the tourist trade in the area. In 1886 he was elected councilor for the Village of Niagara Falls, and was re-elected almost every year until his retirement from public office in 1901. When he died in 1905, Plato was given a lengthy obituary in the newspaper, was recognized by the newly formed City of Niagara Falls as an outstanding public servant, and was honoured by city hall with the flag in front of the building lowered to half-mast for several days. The newspaper eulogized him as “the venerable patriarch of the colored settlement in this city” and praised him as “an earnest Christian, a faithful attendant at church and a constant student of the Scriptures and there are few men who can claim more real credit at the end of their life’s work than Burr Plato.”³⁸

While the unique career of Burr Plato caused him to stand out as a member of the community, other less celebrated “colored” figures were also acknowledged by the press in obituaries. On November 13, 1900, the newspaper reported that, “Mrs. Fayette (colored), a well-known and highly respected resident of this village, passed away last week.”³⁹ Another noteworthy obituary appeared in the newspaper on June 2, 1903:

The colored residents of this section as well as many whites regret the death of Charles Davis, who died on Friday at his home on Stanley Street at a very advanced age. Deceased escaped from slavery in Maryland many years before the Civil War and was one of the few survivors of the colony of fugitives which collected here. His honesty, industry and temperate life won him many friends and while many hearts are sad Charles Davis is now enjoying his hard earned reward.⁴⁰

The very fact that these obituaries appeared in the newspaper is significant. As we shall see later with the Italian and Eastern European immigrants, obituaries were only reported in situations

³⁸ *People’s Press*, October 3, 1905; See also Sherman Zavitz, *The Niagara Falls Review*, February 18, 2017.

³⁹ *People’s Press*, November 13, 1900.

⁴⁰ *People’s Press*, June 2, 1903.

where the foreigner's death was in some way remarkable or spectacularly tragic. These Black residents, however, were singled out in the community newspaper as being individuals worthy of commendation and respect by all of the townsfolk- "colored" and "white" alike.

It is also true, however, that the Black residents were *labelled* by the press as "colored". For news items, it apparently was important to identify who people were, especially if they were not members of the predominantly British Canadian community. For instance, about the only time an Irishman was ever recognized as such in the newspaper was if the report dealt with drunk and disorderly behaviour. Blacks and foreigners, on the other hand, were almost always identified in the local press, whether the article was laudatory, disparaging or neutral in nature.

While African Canadians living in Niagara Falls must have experienced racism and discrimination (the list of their occupational status would seem to suggest this),⁴¹ the press is largely silent on this issue. In reading the Niagara Falls newspaper reports from 1900 to 1911, I only encountered the epithet "coon" once, and never encountered the word "nigger" at all.⁴² The Niagara Falls press never adopted a tone of aggressive, virulent racism and prejudice towards the African Canadian population living within their community, and it is important to keep this fact in mind when we examine the experience of the foreigners later on. While racism and prejudice existed, it was most often expressed in the press in a paternalistic and condescendingly polite nature. An interesting report made in the Niagara Falls New York press would seem to corroborate this. William H. Feder relates the story of a Black American worker employed on a Canadian construction jobsite, observing that, "Black workers in oil skin garb were greeted in

⁴¹ See Appendix II.

⁴² The one news story appeared in the *People's Press* September 8, 1903, and was intended to be a humorous story about a "half-witted negro from Falls View" and his run-in with police magistrate Colonel Cruickshank. "The colonel," it was reported, "was not 'on to' the peculiarities of the blue-eyed coon."

Canada with a dignified hello, while people in Niagara Falls, New York ran into their houses and slammed their doors.”⁴³ While it was perfectly acceptable for “colored” men and women to work in the hotels as cooks, bellboys and chamber maids, it may be that not all of the local establishments welcomed them equally as guests. In a letter to the editor of *The Daily Record* on the controversial subject of licensed hotels in the City, “Justice” observed that, “The St. Clair hotel is not in a thickly populated district, but it fills a want that other hotels seem to disregard, owing to racial prejudice.”⁴⁴

The 1891 manuscript census also reveals the existence of a small number of Italian inhabitants living in the area, recording 12 in the Town of Niagara Falls, 16 in Stamford Township, and 34 in the Village. According to Seibel, “The first to arrive- and only ten years after Confederation- was Sebastian Quagliariello.”⁴⁵ The census reveals a significant difference between the composition of the Italian households and those of the African Canadian inhabitants. In most all cases, the Italian household was made up of the nuclear family- a father, mother, children, and usually the presence of a few lodgers. For both the 1891 and 1901 census, not one Italian woman was reported as having worked outside of the home. Italian women also never lived by themselves or formed households without the presence of a male.⁴⁶ The presence of lodgers is also noteworthy. African Canadians rarely took lodgers into their homes (only 3 in 1891), whereas Italian households often did. Already in 1891, of the 14 Italian nuclear households 5 took in lodgers. Lodgers were almost always male (except in the case of a married

⁴³ *Niagara Falls Gazette*, August 31, 1892, as related in William H. Feder, *The Evolution of an Ethnic Neighborhood That Became United in Diversity: The East Side, Niagara Falls, New York 1880-1930* (Amherst, NY: BMP Inc., 2000), 141.

⁴⁴ *The Daily Record*, December 12, 1908.

⁴⁵ Seibel, *Niagara Falls: A History*, 166. The Quagliariello name pops up many times in the historical records, and was invariably butchered by every person who attempted to spell it.

⁴⁶ The only exception I have encountered is that of Mary Baldi, widowed, living in Niagara Falls in 1911. She and her 16 year old daughter worked as domestics to support themselves and the three younger children. She also took in two lodgers to help make ends meet. See page 71. “1911 Census of Canada”.

couple- never single females), and were either young and single or older and married, but the married men usually did not have their wives or children with them. This strongly suggests the presence of sojourner labourers. As well, the 1891 census reports the presence of one all male boardinghouse in the Village of Niagara Falls, where six Italian men under the age of 40, and apparently all single, resided.

It is surprising to discover not only the presence of an Italian immigrant community so early in and around Niagara Falls, but also the presence of sojourner labourers. The census, unfortunately, is quite vague as to the nature of their employment, merely listing most of them as “general laborers”. According to Ruth Bleasdale, by the 1870s Italian labourers were employed on construction of the Third Welland Canal, and it would seem that a few of them decided to remain in the area.⁴⁷ Two of the family men appear to have worked for the railroad, and one 25-year-old worked as a “Huxter” (i.e. huckster). Interestingly, as early as 1891, we find Antonio Olivera, a resident of the Town of Niagara Falls, recorded as being a “Storekeeper”, unfortunately nothing further was discovered about him or his business, as he disappeared by the time of the 1901 census.⁴⁸ One last point of interest, is the fact that five of the Italian men who started families in 1891 married non-Italian wives; the women being born in the United States, England and Ontario. As we shall see, intermarriage of this sort existed but remained rare within the Italian immigrant community. The fact that it occurred relatively more often in this earlier period is most likely due to the fact that there were fewer Italian women living in the vicinity.

⁴⁷ Italian labourers started to arrive in Canada (most likely from the U.S.) later in the century to work on various canal and railroad construction projects. See Ruth Bleasdale, “Unskilled Labourers on the Public Works of Canada 1840-1880” (Dissertation: University of Western Ontario, 1984), 263.

⁴⁸ “1891 Census of Canada”. See Appendix II.

Peoples other than those discussed thus far (Canadian, British and American born, African Canadians, Germans and Italians) barely register in the 1891 census of the Niagara Falls area. The next largest ethnic minority group reported is that of French Canadians, at only ten. Two Dutch, two Danes, and a few more bring the whole “Other” category up to a grand total of eighteen, making for an area that was, with the exception of the Village of Niagara Falls, very ethnically homogeneous.

By the time of the 1901 census, a few things had changed, most notably a modest increase in the Italian population, with Stamford registering 44 Italian residents, the Town of Niagara Falls 40, and the Village 31, making for a community of 115 in total. The 1901 census was more precise than the previous one, and more information can be determined about these individuals. By this time, Sebastian Quagliariello still apparently owned a house in Stamford, but he had opened a confectionary and fruit store at 9 Centre Street in the Town of Niagara Falls. Other Italian entrepreneurs also opened businesses: Pasquale Prestia ran a confectionary and fruit store at 491 Victoria Avenue, likewise Frank Pusatere on Bridge Street, Tony Bova on Park Street, and Michael Rosa a grocery store on Queen Street.⁴⁹ Rocco Cupolo, a resident of Stamford just outside of the Town limits on Stanley Avenue, had opened a contracting business by this time, and as we shall discover, he very quickly became one of the leading businessmen in the Italian community of Niagara Falls.

While many of the observations about the 1891 census regarding Italian households apply to the 1901 census as well, one interesting anomaly appears in the person of Michael Colengello of Stamford. Colengello is listed in the census as being 48 years old, married, arrived to Canada

⁴⁹ Operation of fruit and vegetable stores was a “typically Italian” occupation. See Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 68-100. “1901 Census of Canada”, *Waite’s Directory of the City of Niagara Falls Ontario for 1904-1905*. Hamilton: 1904.

in 1888, and employed as a farm labourer. While Colengello is recorded as being born in Italy and his “Racial or Tribal Origin” is Italian, his wife Ellen and two lodgers are Ontario-born African Canadians. Another individual who we shall hear more about is an Italian man named Mark Mundier. Mundier is noteworthy due to the fact that he married an English woman; only two other Italian men reported in the 1901 census married women of English or Canadian birth. As noted previously, most Italian men married Italian women, and vice versa.

Attempting to determine where the Italian immigrants settled in the Niagara Falls area before 1901 is not an easy task. In the case of the 1891 census, no records survive which state precisely where the people enumerated lived. A separate schedule does exist for the 1901 census, but it must be correlated to the page and line numbers of the population statistics recorded on Schedule 1, which is an *extremely* tedious procedure. To further complicate matters, different census takers used different methods of location; for Chippawa and the Village, they largely used street references, but for the Town and Stamford, they used lot numbers. In theory, correlating these lot numbers to some sort of master plan should be a simple matter, but I found it to be almost impossible. Often, the census takers were sloppy, and the lot numbers recorded on the census schedule for 1901 bear little to no relationship to those recorded on maps of the Town or City of Niagara Falls, or Stamford Township. City directories printed after 1904 provided helpful clues, as well as stray newspaper stories and the odd archival map.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ For instance- The 1901 census recorded Michael Colangelo as living at “WCP 722”, which is meaningless gibberish. From a newspaper account of a liquor raid on “Little Italy” in April of 1904, we learn that “Michael Colangelo [lived] on Stanley avenue, about a quarter of a mile from Ferry street...” From a survey map dated Aug. 2, 1904 (Niagara Falls History Museum #970.D.11.377), we find that lot 722 was located on the east side of Stanley Ave. at the north corner of present day North St., placing it just inside of the boundary of Stamford Township, outside the City boundary, yet within the boundaries of “Little Italy”. See Appendix III.

The Italian immigrants appear to have settled, for the most part, in the large area bordered by Stanley Avenue, Ferry Street, Victoria Avenue, and Kitchener Street.⁵¹ In 1901, this area was fairly sparsely settled, occupying a position on the fringe of the Center and the Village, with a portion of it actually lying within Stamford Township. As noted, by this time, Sebastian Quagliariello opened a confectionary and fruit store at 9 Centre Street, a short walk for most people living in the area. In October of 1900, the newspaper reported that “Pasquale Prestia, ‘Little Mike,’ the well-known fruit dealer” had purchased a new store in the Centre “on Victoria Avenue, opposite the M. C. Ry. depot”.⁵² As well, a smaller Italian community resided in the “downtown” area of the Town of Niagara Falls (about a mile to the north), taking advantage of the commercial opportunities more readily available in the town’s centre.

In 1901, most of the Italian men worked either as farm labourers, or as general labourers, some being employed on the construction of the new electric street railway in the summer of 1900.⁵³ Others were undoubtedly employed by Rocco Cupolo and Peter Quagliariello in their contracting business. Cupolo adopted the name Frank Bell and Bros. Construction for his business, and was busily engaged in constructing sewers and sidewalks for the growing town.⁵⁴ By 1901 there were nine Italian business owners in the area: seven store owners and two contractors. The 1901 census describes a more settled Italian community than that of 1891; 23 settled family households with only nine lone male lodgers. This situation rapidly changed soon after the census was taken.

⁵¹ See map page 53.

⁵² *Welland Tribune*, October 19, 1900.

⁵³ *Welland Tribune*, July 20, 1900. See Appendix II.

⁵⁴ Seibel, *Niagara Falls: A History*, 167, *Welland Tribune*, January 26, 1906. The newspaper notes that both Cupolo and Quagliariello were initially partners in the contracting business, but had a falling out and went their separate ways. *People’s Press*, October 30, 1906.

According to the 1901 census, there had been an influx of “Others” since the previous census. The area experienced a modest increase in the number of French Canadians, Swedish, French and Swiss residents. The Town of Niagara Falls also witnessed the opening of two “Chinese Laundries” downtown on Park Street and Erie Avenue. In July 1900, the newspaper reported that, “Charlie Lee, another son of the Middle Kingdom, has arrived in town and opened a laundry on Erie Ave.”⁵⁵ The “Chinese colony” of Niagara Falls remained quite small, numbering only four in 1901 and barely twenty by 1911, and for the most part its members either owned or worked in laundries. A few were also employed as cooks in hotels.⁵⁶ As with the “colored” residents, the Chinese were always identified as such in the newspaper, sometimes accompanied by the derogatory terms “Celestial,” “Chink” or “the heathen Chinee”, but because their numbers were so small, their names rarely appeared in the press.⁵⁷ All told, the 1901 census documented only 64 people of birthplaces and ethnic backgrounds other than Canadian, American, British or Italian in Chippawa, Stamford, and the Town and Village of Niagara Falls—less than 1% of the total population.⁵⁸

By 1901, the Town and Village could boast a few modern conveniences, such as electric lighting, a telephone exchange and an electric street railway. Two small generating stations provided electrical power to the city, and the availability of electrical power drew a few manufacturing concerns to the Town.⁵⁹ The factories in the town included the Oneida Community, Niagara Neckwear, Ontario Silverplate, Dominion Suspender, the Carborundum,

⁵⁵ *People's Press*, July 17, 1900.

⁵⁶ *Welland Tribune*, January 4, 1907. See Appendix II.

⁵⁷ *People's Press*, January 20, 1903; *People's Press*, October 16, 1906. Between 1900 and 1911, I only counted eleven Niagara Falls newspaper accounts featuring Chinese residents. Despite their numbers being so few, the December 13, 1904 *People's Press* referred to “the residents of the Park Street Chinatown”.

⁵⁸ See Appendix I. “1901 Census of Canada”

⁵⁹ George A Seibel, *Ontario's Niagara Parks: 100 Years*, (Niagara Falls, Ont. The Niagara Parks Commission, 1985), 152-153; Seibel, *Niagara Falls, Canada: A History*, 107.

and Hind's Paper Box.⁶⁰ Even at this early stage, Niagara Falls became the home of American companies which opened branch plants in Canada. They did so in order to avoid prohibitively high tariffs placed by the Canadian government on American manufactured goods entering the country. In the case of Hind's Paper Box, the company was a Niagara Falls New York manufacturer who supplied many local businesses with cardboard boxes for packaging. The newspaper observed in October 1900 that the company was commencing operations on the Canadian side. "The branch factory is being opened here to avoid the import duty of 35 per cent on manufactured paper boxes."⁶¹

In large measure, the historical development of Niagara Falls relied on its close proximity to the border with the United States. By 1901 three bridges spanned the Niagara River, facilitating trade, travel, and communication between the two countries. The volume of rail traffic between Niagara Falls Ontario and Niagara Falls New York was truly staggering. For the month of April 1900, the newspaper reported that a total of 60,811 freight cars crossed the river at Niagara Falls, just in that one month.⁶² By 1910, the port of Niagara Falls held third place for all of Canada in terms of the value of its exports to the United States- \$22,755,199.⁶³ As well as steam railway traffic, the two cities were connected by electric street railway service, making travel across the border quick and easy. Intercourse between the American City and Canadian Town of Niagara Falls was regular and relatively free of restrictions for citizens of both

⁶⁰ It is difficult to nail down precisely how many manufacturers there were in the town before 1904. Seibel's *Niagara Falls* on page 80 asserts that "Niagara Falls was an industrial complex by 1900", which is utter nonsense when discussing the Canadian town. These companies are mentioned in the *People's Press*, October 30 and November 16, 1900, and the *Welland Tribune*, August 24, 1900.

⁶¹ *People's Press*, October 30, 1900.

⁶² *People's Press*, May 8, 1900.

⁶³ *People's Press*, June 7, 1910.

countries, and both communities often shared goods and services with each other.⁶⁴ Newspapers on both sides of the river regularly reported on local news of interest, the police departments of both communities worked closely together, and occasionally funeral processions would cross the bridge for internment of individuals in the other country.⁶⁵ Workers regularly crossed the bridge each day, especially railroad employees who worked for both the Michigan Central and the Grand Trunk railways.⁶⁶

As Niagara Falls, New York experienced an industrial boom in the late 1890s, living accommodations became scarce, prompting the Niagara Falls, Ontario village newspaper correspondent to report:

A number of families are moving from Niagara Falls N.Y. to this village and the Centre this spring. The reason for the change is that it is cheaper for the men who work on the American side to live in Canada, and cross over every day, than for them to live on the other side. Rents are very high in the American city, and are still rising. The prevalence of typhoid fever is also driving numbers across the line. This village is one of the most favorable locations imaginable for those who move to this side, and when we get our electric street railway in running order, nothing will be lacking for the comfort and convenience of the workingman.⁶⁷

While Niagara Falls New York quickly turned into a dirty industrial city of 30,000, the Canadian side of the river close to the Falls was protected by the Niagara Parks Commission, and any commercial ventures in and around Victoria Park were largely restricted to the tourism industry. Tourism to the area was made convenient by the railroads (both steam and electric after 1900), and also steamship service across Lake Ontario from Toronto. Railroad companies offered cheap rates and special trains to large excursion groups who visited the Falls, and some of these tour

⁶⁴ *People's Press*, June 7, 1910; The *People's Press*, January 17, 1905, reported that low water levels in the river caused the Canadian City to run out of water. "Niagara Falls N.Y. again gave aid by means of two lines of fire hose across the lower bridge."

⁶⁵ *People's Press*, July 19, 1904. See *Burial Records of William Dalton*. Quite a few Americans are buried in Drummond Hill cemetery. *People's Press* December 22, 1903 reported that the funeral of a Polish worker killed in Niagara Falls Ontario took place "from Morse and Son's undertaking establishment here to the Polish church and cemetery on the American side."

⁶⁶ *Welland Tribune*, November 27, 1903, September 17, 1909.

⁶⁷ *Welland Tribune*, April 27, 1900.

groups were quite large. For example, the July 23, 1907 *People's Press* reported that, "The retail grocer's day, last Wednesday, was again the largest excursion of the season. Thirty thousand people visited the Falls that day," most of the visitors coming from Hamilton, Brantford, Toronto and St. Catharines.⁶⁸ Tourism provided many jobs during the summer months, affording seasonal job opportunities to "girls... as cooks, waitresses, clerks and in domestic service."⁶⁹ While many tourists enjoyed their visits, and businesses serving tourists enjoyed profiting by them, neither group was particularly fond of the restrictions placed upon Sunday tourism and commerce by Canadian law.

In many respects, life on the Canadian side of the river was still firmly rooted in the Victorian era, where British ideas of law and order and conceptions of morality were strictly enforced. Perhaps the best example of this was enshrined in law known as The Lord's Day Act. Both the federal and provincial Lord's Day Acts defined what could or could not be done on Sundays, with the Ontario Act being the more restrictive of the two.⁷⁰ The Lord's Day Act was usually enforced by the police, but it was enthusiastically maintained locally and politically lobbied for in the Ontario Legislature by the Lord's Day Alliance. The Lord's Day Alliance was a community citizens' group, usually organized by local ministers, who felt it was their responsibility to enforce the restrictive laws against commerce outlined in the Lord's Day Act. In Niagara Falls, the Lord's Day Alliance frequently butted heads with those engaged in the tourist

⁶⁸ *People's Press*, July 23, 1907. The paper went on to report that the Grand Trunk ran six special excursion trains and the Michigan Central four to accommodate the high volume of traffic.

⁶⁹ *Welland Tribune*, March 22, 1901. See also help wanted ads, *The Niagara Falls Daily Record* December 12, 18, 1908, April 30, 1909, August 2, 1909- "WANTED-COOK AT ONCE- SINGLE Woman or Chinaman. Apply Parkside Hotel."

⁷⁰ The August 18, 1903 *People's Press* observed, "The quashing of the Ontario Lord's Day Act by the Privy Council leaves the Dominion act the only law of the kind in force. This is much the same as the former Ontario Act, but it does not prohibit Sunday steamboat or electric railway excursions."

trade, and in their righteous zeal to uphold the laws of God and the Province of Ontario, they frequently made enemies. They even reproved the police at times to properly enforce the law:

A deputation of the local branch of the Lord's Day Alliance waited on Chief Mains one day last week and informed him that the Alliance intended to have the Sunday closing law carried out to the letter, and that all ice cream parlors, soda fountains, curio shops, barber shops, newsstands and everything else that has been doing business on Sundays must close up at 12 p.m. on Saturday hereafter or there would be war to the knife and the knife to the hilt. The news of this action of the Alliance spread like wildfire and caused a profound sensation. Dozens of places in town do more business on Sunday than on any other two days in the week, and the Sunday closing means the loss of a lot of money to them. The Pan-American crowds will be at the Falls Sundays and will be both hungry and thirsty, but they must either drink a tepid solution of real estate from the public fountains and taps or go to the American side for even a simple glass of lemonade. The keepers of refreshment stands see despair and ruin staring them in the face, but their rivals on the American side are jubilant. Even the humble "dago" fruit man with his push cart or his basket must stay home on Sunday and his "bananeoes" and "peanuts cheepata, five a sack" will no longer be heard at the roadside.⁷¹

Other than going to church or walking around Victoria Park, there was not much for either tourists or the inhabitants of the Canadian side to do on Sundays. Of course, all establishments were forbidden to sell alcohol on Sundays; even playing golf on Sunday required the special intervention of the local magistrate and the County Crown Attorney in Welland to keep the links open Sundays at Falls View.⁷² On the American side, however, it was largely business as usual for the tourist trade on Sundays.

As much as Canadians chafed under the restrictive Sunday laws, they nevertheless took pride in the fact that they were British subjects, and subject to British law and order, as opposed to the perceived lawlessness and anarchy which prevailed in the United States.⁷³ The ties which bound Canada to Great Britain were still very strong before World War One, and in 1900 both the Town and Village of Niagara Falls could celebrate the fact that a few of their local sons were performing their patriotic duty by serving with the military in South Africa against the Boers.

⁷¹ *People's Press*, May 21, 1901. See also *Welland Tribune*, June 29, 1906.

⁷² *People's Press*, October 30, 1900. The Ontario Police had ordered golfers to quit playing on Sunday, but the golfers evidently had friends in high places and managed to have the order rescinded.

⁷³ *People's Press*, September 8, 1903, September 27, 1904.

When news arrived of the relief of Mafeking in May of 1900, there was much “mafficking” in both the Town and Village, including a parade, bonfires and fireworks displays till midnight.⁷⁴ A few days later, Victoria Day was celebrated with further outpourings of patriotic sentiment, and about a week after that, the newspaper observed:

A rousing patriotic service was held in Lundy’s Lane Methodist church last Sunday evening. A powerful spirit of loyalty stirred the heart of everyone present, and the interest reached a climax when the large congregation rose en masse and sang with heart and voice, “God Save the Queen.” Niagara Falls South is close to the border of a foreign land, with which we have a close connection, but we doubt if a more thoroughly British village can be found in the empire.⁷⁵

We see, then, that in 1901, the Town and Village of Niagara Falls, as well as surrounding Stamford Township, were by and large both ethnically and culturally British Canadian. African Canadians formed the largest and most visible group of inhabitants in and around Niagara Falls who were not descended from British origins, and had been a presence in the area for at least forty years. Relatively few in number and settled in nature, African Canadians experienced a certain degree of acceptance from British Canadians, but they faced racial discrimination by the press and in employment, relegated to menial jobs. A smaller number of Italian immigrants had also arrived in the area, some as sojourner labourers, but most as settled residents by 1901. While a few Italian merchants had set up shop in the town and village, most Italian immigrants were employed as labourers. Even at this early date, several patterns had been established which would continue to influence the development of immigrant communities within Niagara Falls. Racialized minorities such as the Italians and African Canadians (for the most part) lived in distinct and separate areas in the village and the south end of town, they were largely employed as labourers or in servile occupations, and they were identified in the press by their race/ethnicity.

⁷⁴ *People’s Press*, May 22, 1900.

⁷⁵ *Welland Tribune*, June 1, 1900.

CHAPTER II- ELECTRICAL DEVELOPMENT AND INFLUX OF “FOREIGN”

LABOUR

Hydro-electrical power development along the Niagara River profoundly altered the economic and social landscape of the area. Massive construction projects attracted itinerant unskilled labourers to the area in search of jobs, including hundreds of Italian and Eastern European workmen. Contractors regularly exploited African American and foreign workers, hiring them for the most dangerous and least desirable jobs, while workers often resisted their employers through labour strikes, with mixed results. The rapid increase of workmen placed strain on the existing infrastructure, and the increase of foreign workers produced unease amongst the settled residents, especially fears of violent crime. Hundreds of Italian workers boarded in the area previously settled by Italian residents, and there soon emerged a differentiation in the press between the foreign sojourner labourers and those foreigners who were known to be established residents of the area.

Rumours regarding the development of electrical generating stations on the Canadian side of the Niagara River had been floating around for about ten years prior to 1901.⁷⁶ In January of 1900, the newspaper reported that “matters are as indefinite as ever”, as different companies continued to approach both the Parks Commission and the provincial government with schemes to generate electricity in the area around the Falls.⁷⁷ Finally, the long wait was over, and in an article dated May 6, 1901, the *People’s Press* reported that work had finally commenced by the Canadian Niagara Power Company on construction in Victoria Park above the Falls. The

⁷⁶ Seibel, *Ontario’s Niagara Parks*, 152, 154.

⁷⁷ *People’s Press*, January 23, 1900; See also *Welland Tribune*, February 2, 1900; *People’s Press*, February 15, 1901, March 22, 1901.

company was in fact the same American business concern (under a different name) that had recently completed one of the electrical generating stations in Niagara Falls, N.Y. which supplied the city of Buffalo with power. The same article noted that:

“A.S. [A.C.] Douglass of Niagara Falls, N.Y., who had the contracts on the tunnel on that side of the river and who recently extended the wheel pits, is said to have signed a contract on Saturday at noon with the Canadian Niagara Power Co. to build the power canal and tunnel in the Canadian park.”⁷⁸

A.C. Douglas went on to become one of the largest contractors involved in the construction of all three Canadian power plants, as the company had gained invaluable experience working on similar projects in Niagara Falls New York. The required tunnel for the Canadian Niagara Power (C.N.P.) facility alone was planned to be 2,200 feet in length, 19 x 21 feet high, constructed of brick 160 feet underground.⁷⁹ While the Americans were apparently forced to farm some of the other work out to Canadian contractors as part of the deal they made with the Ontario government, A.C. Douglas appears to have held all three tunneling contracts.⁸⁰ As construction got well underway, the newspaper reported that the contract for the construction of the C.N.P. wheel-pit had been given to the St. Catharines firm of Dawson & Reilly, observing that:

The awarding of the contract to a Canadian firm and one located so near the Falls gives great satisfaction, as it is likely they will employ more Canadian labor than A. C. Douglass, the contractor who is building the tunnel, who brings most of his men from the American side.⁸¹

Many workmen employed by A.C. Douglas lived in Niagara Falls N.Y., and commuted to work each day via the electric street railway across the Upper Steel Arch Bridge, which had been recently completed in 1898.⁸²

⁷⁸ *People's Press*, May 7, 1901. Douglas is often spelled Douglass. I have adopted the former.

⁷⁹ *People's Press*, November 12, 1901.

⁸⁰ *People's Press*, October 8, 1901, January 21, 1902, May 19, 1903; *Welland Tribune*, August 29, 1902.

⁸¹ *People's Press*, January 21, 1902.

⁸² Seibel, *Niagara Falls, Canada*, 338; *Welland Tribune*, October 24, 1902, April 17, 1903.

As work progressed on the massive construction project above the Falls throughout the summer of 1901, the grounds of Victoria Park were torn up and converted into one huge construction jobsite. Tourists would gather to watch the men work, and on Sundays the townsfolk would descend on the area to see what progress had been made throughout the week.⁸³ Blasting into the bedrock with both dynamite and gunpowder had commenced by the fall, and residents of the area regularly had their windows shattered due to the force of the blasts.⁸⁴ In March of 1902, work began on the second electrical development project, that of the Ontario Power Company (another American concern), and by the fall of that year workers on both jobsites were regularly blasting and excavating enormous amounts of rock from the riverbed, from the cliff face of the gorge, and from deep underground. Large quantities of explosives were used each day, and one news report claimed 100 pounds of dynamite were used every 12 hours.⁸⁵ Some of the blasts were truly phenomenal, such as the one reported on November 4, 1902 at the Ontario Power construction site below the Falls. In the explosion, 2500 lbs. of black powder and 300 lbs. of dynamite were detonated, causing damage as far away as the American side, and two unfortunate tourists on Goat Island were killed by a 200 lb. chunk of flying rock.⁸⁶ The potential for some sort of cataclysmic disaster in the town or the village existed, and was feared by the residents.⁸⁷ The newspaper related the following point of consternation:

A lot of complaints are heard about the way dynamite for the power works is conveyed through the streets. It is said there is no danger from it, but the sight of a ton or so of the explosive being slowly moved along Bridge, Erie and Queen among whizzing trolleys and across other railways gives timid people a decided chill. One day last week a rickety old one horse wagon which looked as though it might collapse at any minute was drawn

⁸³ *Welland Tribune*, June 14, 1901; *People's Press*, October 8, 1901.

⁸⁴ *People's Press*, October 8, 1901, November 4, 1902; *Welland Tribune*, October 31, 1902.

⁸⁵ *People's Press*, April 29, 1902.

⁸⁶ *Welland Tribune*, October 31, 1902, *People's Press*, November 4, 1902.

⁸⁷ See *People's Press* April 29, 1902. "A FIENDISH ATTEMPT to Dynamite Niagara Falls Power Tunnel." The dramatic story is told of a supposed sabotage plan involving 75 pounds of dynamite discovered connected for detonation by workers on the night shift. Nothing ever came of the story, and the "dastardly attempt" was most likely the result of an error made by an over-tired employee.

along the streets by a weary-looking old horse. The driver said he had 1000 pounds of dynamite in his load.⁸⁸

Dynamite explosions were not the only things the townspeople had reason to fear. In February 1903, news was announced that the provincial government had brokered a deal with a third electrical development company comprised of Canadians based out of Toronto. Reporting on the deal, the local press observed that “The news was received with mixed feelings...a doubt as to how the town will fare in contact with three great corporations struggling for advantage kept many a thinking citizen from rejoicing at the news.”⁸⁹ Initially, most of the residents were excited by the prospects that electrical development promised for the Town and Village, such as increased business for the merchants and a potential boom in real estate and the housing market.⁹⁰ As workers poured into the area, hotels and boarding houses soon became full, and residents with a spare room opened up their houses to lodgers in order to earn some extra money.⁹¹ While there was sporadic talk of the contractors constructing boarding houses for the workmen, no solid evidence was found that this ever occurred.⁹²

Some of the workers were specifically recruited due to specialized skills which they possessed, and they were paid higher wages and stayed in local hotels. In the fall of 1901, one of

⁸⁸ *People's Press*, September 16, 1902.

⁸⁹ *People's Press*, February 3, 1903.

⁹⁰ *Welland Tribune*, May 10, 1901.

⁹¹ *Welland Tribune*, August 23, 1901; October 25, 1901.

⁹² See *People's Press*, October 8, 1901. The newspaper is frustratingly vague about the purposes of the buildings the contractors built for the workmen. They provided change rooms and lunch rooms, machinery and storage sheds, but the paper never specifically stated that the companies provided the workers with living or sleeping accommodations. The August 29, 1902 *Tribune* reported that “A. C. Douglass, contractor for the tunnel and portal, is having a large building put up for the use of his men,” and leaves it at that. If they did indeed construct some sort of buildings for the workers to live in, they must have been miserable affairs that only the most desperate men occupied, as there was a chronic housing shortage for the workmen in the Town/Village/City for years. The April 3, 1903 *Tribune* reported that “A large number of the workmen employed on the power development here are compelled to live on the other side of the river. It is impossible to rent a house on this side.” Old hotels were converted into boarding houses for workers (such as the old Robinson Hotel- *People's Press*, May 19, 1903), and most references found regarding workmen and living accommodations either explicitly state or imply that boardinghouses were operated by private individuals, and not the employers.

the subcontractors brought in a gang of French Canadians who were skilled crib workers, and they were boarded at the Prospect House in the Village.⁹³ Many, however, were unskilled labourers, and they appear to have been forced to fend for themselves as far as living accommodations were concerned. The newspaper constantly lamented the fact that there was a shortage of housing for the workers, and reported that some workers were forced to live in Niagara Falls N.Y. and commute to work each day.⁹⁴ Others, however, found places to live locally, though the living arrangements were not all that salutary. As early as November 1901, the paper reported:

The power development and resulting general demand for laborers has caused a large influx of Italians to the settlement below the village. In some houses, as many as nine men sleep every night, seven or eight of whom are boarders. In another case, a man is paying \$9 per month for the rent of two rooms and the use of a kitchen stove.⁹⁵

The paper noted that the Italian workers were crowded together in boarding houses, and this situation grew worse as construction on all three power developments accelerated. The scarcity of housing prompted “local capitalists” to buy up available property, and construct boarding houses and “shacks” for the workers to live in. Reporting on a county tax auction, the paper observed that “Some small sections near Falls View and lots on Stanley Avenue, near “Little Italy” caused brisk competition” amongst the bidders, one of whom was the contracting firm of Bell and Lorenzo.⁹⁶

For the residents of the Village of Niagara Falls, the power development appears to have been a mixed blessing. While there was a considerable amount of money to be made from

⁹³ *Welland Tribune*, October 25, 1901, November 1, 1901.

⁹⁴ *Welland Tribune*, April 3, 1903. See also *Welland Tribune*, November 1, 1901, March 21, 1902, August 29, 1902; *People's Press*, January 14, 1902.

⁹⁵ *Welland Tribune*, November 1, 1901.

⁹⁶ *Welland Tribune*, October 18, 1901. This is the earliest date I encountered the term “Little Italy” used in the newspaper to identify the area around Stanley Ave. and Ferry St. It would also appear from this report that Frank Bell (a.k.a. Rocco Cupolo) and Lorenzo (Mr. Quagiariello) profited from the real estate boom. See Appendix III.

providing for the workers, there was an unforeseen problem with the workers themselves. Many of them were foreigners. As noted in the introduction, in the spring of 1902 the press observed that, “The men employed on the power works include Swedes, Hungarians, Polacks, Italians and negroes.”⁹⁷ Unskilled workers were in high demand on the construction sites, as much of the work had to be done by hand, especially the tunneling. The “muckers”, as they were called, carried out one of the worst jobs: it was their responsibility to clean up the rock and mud blasted out of the excavations made by the dynamite. The work was extremely hazardous, and the muckers were frequently involved in wage disputes with the employers. Commenting on one of the first strikes by the employees of A.C. Douglas, the newspaper observed that “The class of employment that is open is the very lowest, and the gangs are made up chiefly of negroes and foreigners. Most of the men are getting \$1.75 and \$2 per day.”⁹⁸ Most of the Black workers employed by A. C. Douglas appear to have been Americans from Niagara Falls N.Y., but the foreigners working on the construction projects drifted in to the area from all over North America and overseas.⁹⁹ The foreigners tended to settle close to the jobsite, and as a result the British Canadian inhabitants of the Village of Niagara Falls soon became aware of large numbers of foreigners living in their midst. As related in the introduction, the newspaper informed its readers in the spring of 1902 that “A number of foreigners who are employed on the power works have rented an old house on Ferry Street, and taken up their abode there. Residents of that street are greatly disgusted with it.”¹⁰⁰ Foreigners were expected to take the worst jobs available and spend their money in the Village, but the residents were reluctant to have them live in close

⁹⁷ *People's Press*, April 29, 1902.

⁹⁸ The fact that African Americans were routinely employed in the lowest menial jobs undoubtedly influenced British Canadian perceptions of suitable types of occupation for their own “colored” residents. Foreigners were also lumped into the same category. *Welland Tribune*, May 9, 1902.

⁹⁹ *Welland Tribune*, October 24, 1902; *People's Press*, November 10, 1903, July 28, 1908.

¹⁰⁰ *Welland Tribune*, May 2, 1902.

proximity. As the housing crisis worsened, local entrepreneurs started converting any types of disused buildings into boarding houses for the foreign workers, provoking even more friction with long-time residents:

The big frame building at the corner of Ferry and Stanley Streets, built for a roller skating rink, used afterwards as a coach house by the Miller & Brundage Co., and latterly as a store house, is now being re-arranged to accommodate a large number of foreign navvies employed on the power works. Residents of the vicinity are greatly disgusted at having “a nest of Dagoes under their very noses.”¹⁰¹

In a follow-up story a month later, this same building was ignominiously dubbed the “Beehive”, as it was reported that it would soon house two hundred navvies.¹⁰² A month after that, the “Beehive” was the scene of a ruckus which alarmed the local inhabitants:

Residents near the corner of Stanley and Ferry thought that war was declared in the “Beehive” on Saturday afternoon. The foreigners swarmed around the place in crowds and appeared to be having an argument of some kind, the babel of tongues being audible some distance away. The arrival of a detachment of Ontario police heightened the interest and attracted more spectators than ever. Investigation showed that some foreign navvies had refused to work any longer in the spray below the falls and were about to leave the place altogether. They wanted to take their belongings and go, but the manager of the hive held the stuff for unpaid board bill. The situation was decidedly critical and a general riot seemed imminent when the police came and straightened things out.¹⁰³

The British Canadian residents of the Village nervously witnessed the foreign population of the area increasing, and the potential for more disturbances like this, as well as fears of general lawlessness on the part of the foreign workers were increasingly voiced in the press. Even before the arrival of the foreign workers, Villagers had been agitating for some sort of police presence to disperse young males who loitered around the streets at night making themselves a nuisance.¹⁰⁴ After the arrival of the foreigners, the press became quite shrill in its demands for a police presence in the Village:

Drunken men reeling along the streets, frightening women and children and shouting profanity, and groups of lads and men wrangling on the street corners, insulting passers-

¹⁰¹ *Welland Tribune*, September 26, 1902.

¹⁰² *Welland Tribune*, October 17, 1902.

¹⁰³ *People's Press*, November 4, 1902.

¹⁰⁴ *Welland Tribune*, September 21, 1900, January 25, 1901.

by and indulging in occasional fights, are every day occurrences in our village. The foreigners from the power development note this and think there is no law enforced here, and that they too can do as they please. Some day something serious will result and our village council will have an awakening that will be, to say the least, uncomfortable.¹⁰⁵

By 1903, when all three developments were under construction, there were at least 1500 workers employed, many of them foreigners, and “keeping the foreign hordes in order” became a great concern of the local residents.¹⁰⁶ Canadians were especially fearful of having their community descend into the type of lawlessness and anarchy that they perceived on the American side.¹⁰⁷ In response to problems with the foreigners, the police usually took a lenient approach and frequently imposed fines on troublemakers, but once in a while they responded with Draconian force in order to send a clear message. In April 1903, an African American worker from Niagara Falls, N.Y. was arrested at one of the construction sites for stealing three pairs of rubber boots. The American police informed their Canadian counterparts that the man in question had a very lengthy criminal record. In court, the Prosecuting Attorney recommended that “an example ought to be made of him, so as to warn the foreigners in our midst.” The Magistrate concurred, and accordingly sentenced the man to five years imprisonment in Kingston Penitentiary.¹⁰⁸

Isolated incidents of violence or lawbreaking committed by foreigners were reported in the press, and, as was the case with the “colored” residents, the press clearly labelled the perpetrators for the edification of their readers. Reports of thefts, fistfights, wife beating, “stabbing affrays”, and drunk and disorderly offences committed by “power Dagos” or “power Polacks” started to appear in the press by 1903; the foreigners involved clearly identified as such

¹⁰⁵ *Welland Tribune*, June 6, 1902. Another article in the same issue says much the same thing about the situation at “The Centre”. See also *Welland Tribune*, October 10, 1902, October 24, 1902, September 11, 1903 *People’s Press*, May 6, 1902.

¹⁰⁶ *People’s Press*, March 31, 1903.

¹⁰⁷ The *Welland Tribune*, April 17, 1903, observed that, “The authorities are determined to repress any misconduct by foreigners here, as that is the only way to prevent a state of affairs similar to that on the other side of the river.”

¹⁰⁸ *Welland Telegraph*, April 24, 1903.

and often associated with the work on the power plants.¹⁰⁹ While the residents and the press may have been worried about the potential for serious trouble arising amongst the foreigners, the prognostications regarding lawless foreigner anarchy and violence went unfulfilled for over two years. When major trouble did rear its head, it did not manifest itself as social disorder; it actually took the form of labour unrest.

Within the first year of construction on the Canadian Niagara Power facility, workers employed by Dawson & Riley went on strike, and strikes and labour trouble would become a regular feature of the work as it progressed. The first major strike happened in April of 1902, when 85 men refused to work until their back wages were paid and the contractor promised to start paying them every two weeks. The newspaper reported that, “The strikers included in their numbers Swedes, Italians, Polacks, negroes and whites, but they showed no inclination to become disorderly.”¹¹⁰ While labour disputes occurred between the employers and the various trades and groups of workmen, often it was the foreign workers who were identified by the press as being the troublemakers- especially the muckers.

One month later, another strike was organized, this time against A.C. Douglas, by the men working in the tunnel. They demanded a pay raise from \$1.75 to \$2.50 per day, as “They claimed that the work was difficult, unpleasant, and dangerous.”¹¹¹ The men were right; the labour conditions in the tunnel were terrible. Shifts worked round the clock through the heat of summer and in the dead of winter. The men excavating both the tunnels and the wheel-pits had to constantly contend with falling rock and ground water, making for hazardous and miserable working conditions. The first fatality of a workman on the job happened in July of 1902, when

¹⁰⁹ *Welland Tribune*, September 26, 1902, April 24, June 5, 1903; *People's Press*, March 24, June 23, 1903.

¹¹⁰ *People's Press*, April 8, 1902.

¹¹¹ *People's Press*, May 6, 1902.

two African American muckers were crushed by a rock fall in the tunnel. The men were extricated and rushed by ambulance to the hospital in Niagara Falls, N.Y., but both died.¹¹² As construction progressed, worker injuries and fatalities increased. The three power companies had deadlines that were spelled out in their contracts, each company required to generate electricity by such and such a date. It is no coincidence that injuries and fatalities increased markedly as each of the three deadlines approached.

The workers apparently were provided with some sort of rudimentary “health and safety” plan, though the term hardly applies to what they actually received. A local doctor was on call to treat various injuries the workers suffered; for this service, the employees of Dawson and Riley were docked 25 cents every two weeks from their pay.¹¹³ When injuries were serious enough to warrant a trip to the hospital in Niagara Falls, N.Y., the power company employing the contractor appears to have paid the expenses incurred.¹¹⁴ Contractors apparently paid for funeral arrangements and burial of men killed on the job.¹¹⁵ It seems that no provision was made, however, for those who suffered debilitating injuries, and workers who were crippled or lost limbs while on the job were forced to fend for themselves. Sometimes, injured Canadian workers sued the contractors who employed them for damages, the cases tried Welland County court. Compensation in the form of cash settlements, however, was extremely difficult to extract from the courts. Sometimes, a judge would reject a case out of hand, invariably citing lack of evidence. At other times, a plaintiff would initially be awarded damages by the jury, only to have

¹¹² *People's Press*, July 22, 1903.

¹¹³ *Welland Telegraph*, June 12, 1908.

¹¹⁴ In a dispute with U.S. Immigration officials regarding admittance into the country and payment of hospitalization for an injured worker, Dr. McGarry assured the officers “that the Electrical Development Company [i.e. Toronto Power] would be responsible for the man as it is for all of its injured employees.” *People's Press*, March 27, 1906.

¹¹⁵ *Welland Tribune*, November 30, 1903, December 16, 1904.

the judge later rule a “non-suit”, siding with the contractor’s claim that the accident was the worker’s fault.¹¹⁶

While the work on the construction projects was dangerous for many of the workers, it was often the foreigners who were given the most dangerous and least desirable jobs of all. Many of the foreign workers were sojourner labourers who had left their families, wives and children at home while they attempted to make money on these construction jobs in order to improve their lives when they returned. Unfortunately, many of these sons, husbands and fathers never made it back home, or they did so horribly disfigured for life. The newspaper related their sad stories to the reading public, but there was no public outcry and absolutely nothing was done to improve the safety of the jobsites or work environments. The injuries and fatalities were accepted as part of the price to be paid for progress, and usually it was the foreign workers who paid the highest price. In one truly reprehensible case, a Hungarian worker whose feet were injured on one of the construction sites developed gangrene, and was sent to the St. Catharines hospital where both his feet were amputated. Niagara Falls city council met to decide his fate, and it was thought best to deport him, for if he was sent to the Industrial Home, “he will be a charge on the city for many years.” Because the man resided in Falls View, city council was reluctant to accept liability, as Stamford Township should have been held responsible to pay for his expenses. After much wrangling, the poor man finally received some compassion, and the Hungarian consul in New York, the men of the Ontario Power Company, and the city all chipped

¹¹⁶ In the case of *Cameron v. A.C. Douglass*, the widow of a foreman killed by falling rock sued the contractor for damages and was awarded \$2,000 by the jury. A month later the judge found that “Cameron knew the shaft was not safe, that he had been specially warned that there was loose rock at the top, that he had the privilege of cleaning it away but instead took the risk and was killed”, and awarded no compensation. *Welland Tribune*, May 6, 1904; *People’s Press*, June 28, 1904. See also *Welland Tribune*, October 30, 1903.

in to pay his way back home.¹¹⁷ Often, spectacular accidents and deaths were related in gruesome detail in the press in order to titillate readers, but often foreigner deaths were dismissed by a few lines in the newspaper and a quick inexpensive burial, mourned by few in this country, with no coroner's inquest being called.¹¹⁸ While an effort was made to ascertain the names of the dead, sometimes men were only known by their numbers.¹¹⁹ It is not clear if or how the families of workers killed were contacted and informed of the deaths. For example, in a brief news item dated January 20, 1905, the coroner ruled "accidental death" in the case of Elie Casteir, who was "killed by an 800-pound bucket being let down on top of him and crushing him flat... Casteir leaves a wife and children in Russia."¹²⁰ Did the company have contact information? Did they even care to notify anyone other than the coroner and payroll clerk? Would fellow workmen who could write notify next of kin in the homeland? In one truly pathetic story, Hungarian worker Hinke Nichola died of injuries sustained by falling rock. A few days later, fellow countrymen opened a letter that had arrived addressed to him. "It was from a son of the dead man, who had not seen his father for three years, and announced the arrival here in a day or two of the son, who on coming will first learn of the death of his parent."¹²¹

Because working conditions were so extremely dangerous, contractors were forced to pay the workmen a fairly decent wage, otherwise no one would offer to hazard their lives to do the work. A foreign mucker making \$2 per day earned in a month close to what a police patrolman

¹¹⁷ *People's Press*, November 22, 1904; *Welland Tribune*, January 13, 1905, January 20, 1905.

¹¹⁸ One sentence summarized this man's life: "Joseph Galoski, 24 years old, fell 160 feet into the wheel pit extension of the Canadian Niagara Power Wednesday and was instantly killed." *Welland Tribune*, December 18, 1903. See also *People's Press*, March 31, 1903, May 19, 1903.

¹¹⁹ A terrible accident reported at great length happened October 30, 1903. Three men died, and the injured were "Three Hungarians, known only by their numbers." The story further related, "One of the men, a Hungarian, known as No. 229, saved himself by clinging to the bucket..." *Welland Tribune*, October 30, 1903.

¹²⁰ *Welland Tribune*, January 20, 1905.

¹²¹ *The Welland Telegraph*, April 5, 1910.

for the City of Niagara Falls was paid.¹²² Employers, however, were always looking for ways to cut expenses, which explains the minimal concern for the safety of the workers and their unwillingness to pay compensation to injured workers.¹²³ As previously mentioned, labour strikes were a recurring event on the three construction projects, with wages being the usual bone of contention. Workers constantly demanded regular payment of wages, increases in pay, or struck to protest employer attempts to cut wages. When workers did strike, contractors invariably complained of high labour costs, and often resorted to hiring new men and dismissed the troublemakers. Workers were aware that they were being exploited, and they resorted to the only form of protest that was available to them- withholding their labour. Muckers and other unskilled workers were not organized, so their strikes usually fizzled out quite quickly with few concessions ever being granted. Unionized professionals, such as carpenters and teamsters usually received their demands, but the demands of foreign and unskilled workers were not taken very seriously.¹²⁴ Of course, bosses, foremen, supervisors and other professionals were invariably Canadians or Americans, and never caused any trouble, often siding with management in any type of dispute.¹²⁵

Labour trouble caused by foreigners was especially noteworthy to the press. Articles portrayed disputes involving foreign workers as being violent and turning into “riots”. Even

¹²² A police patrolman earned \$50 per month. *People's Press*, May 17, 1904.

¹²³ The buckets previously mentioned were actually muck buckets, used to empty the excavations of rock and muck. Employers, however routinely used them to raise and lower the workers into and out of the excavations. The practice was an accident waiting to happen, and the accident mentioned in footnote 119 actually claimed the lives of five men. The later lawsuit and trial revealed that the accident could have been avoided if a simple safety hook had been used. “The jury found that the apparatus was defective for carrying human beings and it was too easily dumped.” See page 57-59. *Welland Tribune*, November 23, 1906.

¹²⁴ Professionals such as stonemasons could strike and demand as much as 50 cents an hour and an 8 hour workday. *People's Press*, April 7, 1903. See also: *People's Press*, October 15, 1901, April 8, 1902, May 6, 1902, November 11, 1902, *Welland Tribune*, May 9, 1902, July 11, 1902, January 23, 1903.

¹²⁵ In court cases, managers and foremen usually testified in support of the employer. See *Welland Tribune*, October 30, 1903, also page 59.

before construction on the power plants had advanced to any great degree, the newspaper reported that a handful of local Italian railway labourers who went on strike and “threatened serious trouble”, required “firm and judicious action on the part of the employers” to keep them in line.¹²⁶ In 1902, “Riotous Dagoes” working on the Grand Trunk line between Niagara Falls and Thorold refused to work and threw stones at their foremen, requiring one to receive three stitches to close a gash in his forehead. The police were dispatched, and four of the “rioters” were arrested.¹²⁷

The largest strike to occur on the power development site started on November 2, 1903 and involved hundreds of foreigners. It would appear that all of the contractors working on the three power plants arranged collectively to reduce the wages of the men by 25 cents per day, “The order principally affected the muckers, Italian and Hungarian laborers.” The men immediately quit work, and started throwing stones at those who kept working and chased them off the jobsites. Ontario Power was forced to shut down operations, and the Ontario police were initially called. The strike was soon described as a “riot”; the newspaper claiming it to be “One of the most serious events in the history of this place.” A few foremen and superintendents were roughed up by the strikers, and in the evening a meeting was called by the various employers where it was decided to “make a requisition on Col. Cruikshank of the 44th Batt., for military protection.” Captain Coulson of Company No. 1 arrived at the wheel-pit of the Canadian Niagara Power Co. at midnight with 50 men, and the Lundy’s Lane Rifle Corps commanded by Captain Mitchell patrolled Victoria Park. The following day the employees of the Ontario Power Co. were all paid off, under the supervision of the Ontario police detachment, and “three of the

¹²⁶ There were only 15 men who went on strike. How much “serious trouble” could they possibly instigate? *People’s Press*, August 13, 1901.

¹²⁷ *Welland Tribune*, September 19, 1902.

ringleaders were arrested.” All three works were effectively shut down for the day, and the police and militia remained on guard all that day and throughout the night. The next morning:

Several hundred strikers gathered at Falls View, and took a threatening attitude. Shots were exchanged between the mob and the guards. After an order from Col. Cruikshank to disperse and the reading of the Riot Act without any effect, the soldiers were ordered to fix bayonets and charge the mob, which soon scattered before the points of steel. This action seemed to subdue the strikers.¹²⁸

Men started returning to work the following day, protected by the militia and the entire local police force. “A crowd of Italians stood about this morning and jeered the men who were returning, but they broke and ran when the soldiers started for them.” In all, fifteen men were arrested, and charged with “creating and abetting a riot”, all Italians.¹²⁹

In a final summation of the events of the previous few days, the paper reported on November 10 that all was quiet, the militia sent home, and that an estimated 225 strikers “have left the place. Many of them are back in Buffalo, where they came from and the others have gone to other places in the States.” Although the military had been dismissed, it was observed that “Almost every evening there is some shooting by nervous guards or rattle-pated foreigners in the vicinity of the works.” The press effusively praised the militia for their efforts at keeping the rioters in check, giving special thanks to the Lundy’s Lane Rifle Corps “and the South African veterans who turned out and served with the militia.” Most significantly, the newspaper commended the behavior of the resident foreign population during the recent troubles:

To the credit of the resident foreigners be it said that not one of them took any part in the trouble, nor have they made any attempt to aid those in the hands of the authorities other than what one might expect fellow-countrymen in a foreign land to do. Frank Bell, the Italian constable, arrested one of the most dangerous of the rioters now in Welland jail.¹³⁰

¹²⁸ *Welland Tribune*, November 6, 1903. See also *People’s Press*, November 3, 1903; *The Welland Telegraph*, November 5, 1903. Colonel Cruickshank served as the police magistrate and was also a noted historian.

¹²⁹ *Welland Tribune*, November 6, 1903.

¹³⁰ *People’s Press*, November 10, 1903.

These observations are significant. Note that not all of the foreigners were tarred with the same brush; the violent trouble makers were invariably from the United States and appear to have been itinerant labourers. The settled resident foreigners, on the other hand, did not get involved and took no part, at least according to the reporter. Even former foreigner Rocco Cupolo, now reincarnated as special police constable Frank Bell, stepped into the breach and shouldered his civic duty along with the Boer War veterans in an effort to maintain law and order.¹³¹ While there were indeed violent foreigners who threatened social order and public morality, the Niagara Falls press differentiated between the troublemakers and those who wanted to settle into the community and become residents- possibly even citizens.

The commencement of hydro-electrical development on the Canadian side of the river quickly attracted hundreds of foreign workers to the area, many of whom the British Canadian residents viewed with suspicion. Most of these foreign itinerants were unskilled workers, hired to perform the jobs most Canadian workers refused to do. In the public mind, these Italian and Eastern European sojourner labourers came to be associated with drunkenness, violence and labour unrest, and required a firm hand exercised by the authorities to keep them under control. While the sojourner labourers were perceived to be potential troublemakers, the resident Italian population became recognized as a more socially acceptable type of foreigner.

¹³¹ Rocco Cupolo's appointment as a special police constable is an example of the local authorities creating an "ethnic" intermediary between the foreign population and the state. Welland also adopted the same measure in 1908, after their foreign population had increased. See Roger Fast, *Welland and Its Immigrant Community 1900-1920* (St. Catharines: Dept. of History, Brock University, 2005), 18, 19.

CHAPTER III: THE CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS AND FOREIGN LABOURERS

Incorporation of the city coincided with the hydro-electric development in the area and the accompanying population increase provided by the influx of workers. A sharp rise in the number of foreigners residing in the city was observed in the press, especially in the area previously settled by the Italian immigrants. This area of the city soon became known as “Little Italy”. As more foreigners settled within the boundaries of the new city, they increasingly interacted with the apparatus of the state, such as the courts, city officials, the police and public health inspectors. These interactions, reported in the press, reveal discrimination practiced by the state which directly impacted foreign sojourners and residents.

By the beginning of 1903, residents of the area could discern that a major boom was in progress, and they pondered the question- what would be the best way to deal with this situation? In February 1903, the newspaper began running a series of articles which publicly debated the issue of amalgamation between the town and village.

The question of amalgamation of the town and village is a burning one just now and is meeting with warm support and just as strong opposition. There are many in both places who realize that in order to get the fullest benefit from the era of prosperity now dawning, the two towns must work in unison, and not in opposition to each other's interests, as has been the case sometimes in the past. This part of the argument is very evident Union is strength.¹³²

Citizens' meetings as well as meetings between the village and town councils were arranged, and the debate was apparently settled by March, for in May the paper trumpeted the news that Niagara Falls was to become a city January 1, 1904, in accordance to a bill passed in the Ontario Legislature May 21.¹³³ While the town heartily supported amalgamation, a number of people in the village would rather have expanded the borders of the village, annexing Falls View and other

¹³² *Welland Tribune*, February 20, 1903.

¹³³ *People's Press*, May 26, 1903; See also *Welland Tribune*, February 27, 1903.

bits of Stamford Township. After the new City was created, “several prominent and influential citizens” continued to grumble for quite a while that the amalgamation should be dissolved.¹³⁴

The amalgamation did take place, however, and the new City of Niagara Falls was born January 1, 1904. Initial tallies of the new city’s population were somewhat exaggerated due to faulty city census taking (8452!), but we learn later that the actual population of the city in 1904 stood at 7062.¹³⁵ With a greater tax base and a growing population each year, the new city now had the ability to provide more in the way of infrastructure improvements, such as schools, sewers, roads and sidewalks. The population, however, kept growing faster than the infrastructural improvements, and the city was always trying to catch up to provide essential services to the increasing number of residents. School overcrowding especially was a chronic problem. One long awaited benefit to the former village, now known as “the South”, was the hiring of two special police officers. The paper noted this development with “great satisfaction” and opined that, “The condition of affairs on the streets at night is greatly improved and the foreigners, knowing that there is always an officer not far away, are more careful in their behavior.”¹³⁶ Later in the year, the city police deputized some county constables to police the Falls View area, which remained outside the jurisdiction of the city in Stamford Township.¹³⁷ The new city also organized a board of health and employed a Medical Health Officer, in the person of Dr. McGarry.¹³⁸

As the city grew, and basic services such as sewers and garbage collection lagged behind, fear of epidemic disease was often discussed, and the most likely place of origin was anticipated

¹³⁴ *Welland Tribune*, September 9, 1904.

¹³⁵ Yet more evidence to support the argument that computation of census results are often flawed! *Welland Tribune*, August 5, 1904; *Welland Tribune*, June 2, 1905.

¹³⁶ *People’s Press*, April 19, 1904.

¹³⁷ *People’s Press*, October 18, 1904.

¹³⁸ *People’s Press*, April 12, 1904.

to be among the foreign population. The area contended with sporadic outbreaks of smallpox, typhoid, rabies and scarlet fever, and in the days before antibiotics, the residents were justified in their fear of epidemic disease.¹³⁹ In late 1902, as a “smallpox scare” swept the town and village, the newspaper warned, “With so many hundred foreign navvies quartered here, many of them none too clean and sleeping in herds at night, an epidemic of smallpox would be a very terrible occurrence.”¹⁴⁰ After incorporation, the health inspector frequently made the rounds through the foreign sections of town, accompanied by an Italian and Hungarian interpreter, to reprimand the foreigners to clean up their yards or face fines.¹⁴¹ The newspaper reported that some people resisted cleaning up their property, but very graciously conceded the point that “Generally speaking these people are Italians, but, to their shame be it said, there are some “white” people who are worse than any foreigner in this respect.”¹⁴² The board of health also hounded city officials to pass a bylaw against keeping hogs within city limits, and pressed for “the law requiring sewer connections and the abolition of privy vaults and dry earth closets strictly enforced.”¹⁴³ Stamford Township appears to have been much more lax in their enforcement of sanitary bylaws; the City officials noting that the hog nuisance arose “from the feeding of garbage to hogs at the city line.” A quick look at the map will show that the City limits excluded a great deal of the Falls View area, as well as a large block of territory adjoining “Little Italy”. The newspaper reported the visit of a provincial board of health inspector in 1906, “to assist Stamford township authorities in forcing the foreign residents of Falls View to clean up their premises. The township officials have been unable to make the ‘Slobs’ and ‘Dagoes’ put their

¹³⁹ *People’s Press*, June 23, 1903, September 29, 1903, April 19, 1904; *Welland Tribune*, April 24, 1903, February 19, 1904.

¹⁴⁰ *People’s Press*, December 9, 1902.

¹⁴¹ *People’s Press*, April 12, 1904, August 9, 1904.

¹⁴² *Welland Tribune*, May 20, 1904.

¹⁴³ *Welland Tribune*, December 8, 1905.

places in sanitary condition...”¹⁴⁴ The paper claims Stamford Township asked the provincial inspector for help, but I have a strong suspicion it was the City officials who complained to the province about the state of affairs right along their border. As we shall see later, Stamford was extremely lax in enforcing any type of health or safety bylaws.

As work on the power plants kicked into high gear in 1904, the city housed more workmen than ever before. The housing shortage was still as bad as it had been earlier, but steps had been taken to correct it. A building boom commenced in the spring of 1903, and in the fall of that year the paper reported that, “Another crop of houses is maturing in Little Italy. All of them are small. It is to be regretted that some of the wealthier foreigners would not erect better houses.” Some of the wealthier foreigners, however, did just that. In September of 1903, Joe Critelli purchased the “Beehive”, tore most of it down, and replaced it with a new brick store and a new smaller boarding house.¹⁴⁵ Boarding houses were operated mostly at the Centre, “Little Italy” and at Falls View. Falls View had become the area where workers of Eastern European origin lived, and by July of 1904 the newspaper referred to “the Hungarian settlement at the View.”¹⁴⁶ Boarding houses almost always accommodated lone male sojourner laborers, often operated by a husband and wife couple of the same ethnic background as that of the boarders. It would appear that a process of voluntary segregation played out in the boarding houses of Niagara Falls, as workers sought out people to live with from the same ethnic background. I argue in this paper that the Italian sojourner labourers gradually and inevitably drifted to the areas previously settled by Italian immigrants before 1901, and quickly populated the area which

¹⁴⁴ *People's Press*, May 15, 1906.

¹⁴⁵ *People's Press*, September 29, 1903, *Welland Tribune*, October 2, 1903.

¹⁴⁶ *People's Press*, July 26, 1904.



Figure III- "Little Italy"

was dubbed “Little Italy”. There, Italian workers boarded with people who spoke their own language, had familiar foods prepared by the boarding house keeper, shopped at Italian-owned stores in the neighbourhood, and socialized with others of their own ethnic background. Migration chains undoubtedly played a role in this process, and Seibel claims that, “Here settled the immigrants from Southern Italy, relatives and friends for the most part, from the provinces of Catanzaro, Salerno, and Cosenza.”¹⁴⁷ The Hungarians settled at Falls View for reasons of their own: it was close to the jobsites and was separated from the Italian neighbourhood. Surprisingly, there appears to have been little in the way of ethnic tensions between the two groups of

¹⁴⁷ Seibel, *Niagara Falls Canada; A History*, 167. See Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 46-59; Robert F. Harney, *From the Shores of Hardship: Italians in Canada*, ed. Nicholas De Maria Harney (Welland: éditions SOLEIL publishing inc., 1993), 133-137; Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, *Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo 1880-1930* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1977.)

foreigners.¹⁴⁸ If anything, they were much more likely to get into rows amongst themselves. The newspaper is replete with fist fights, knife fights, stabbings and shootings by foreigners of the same ethnic background, fueled by alcohol and sparked by disputes over card games or women.¹⁴⁹

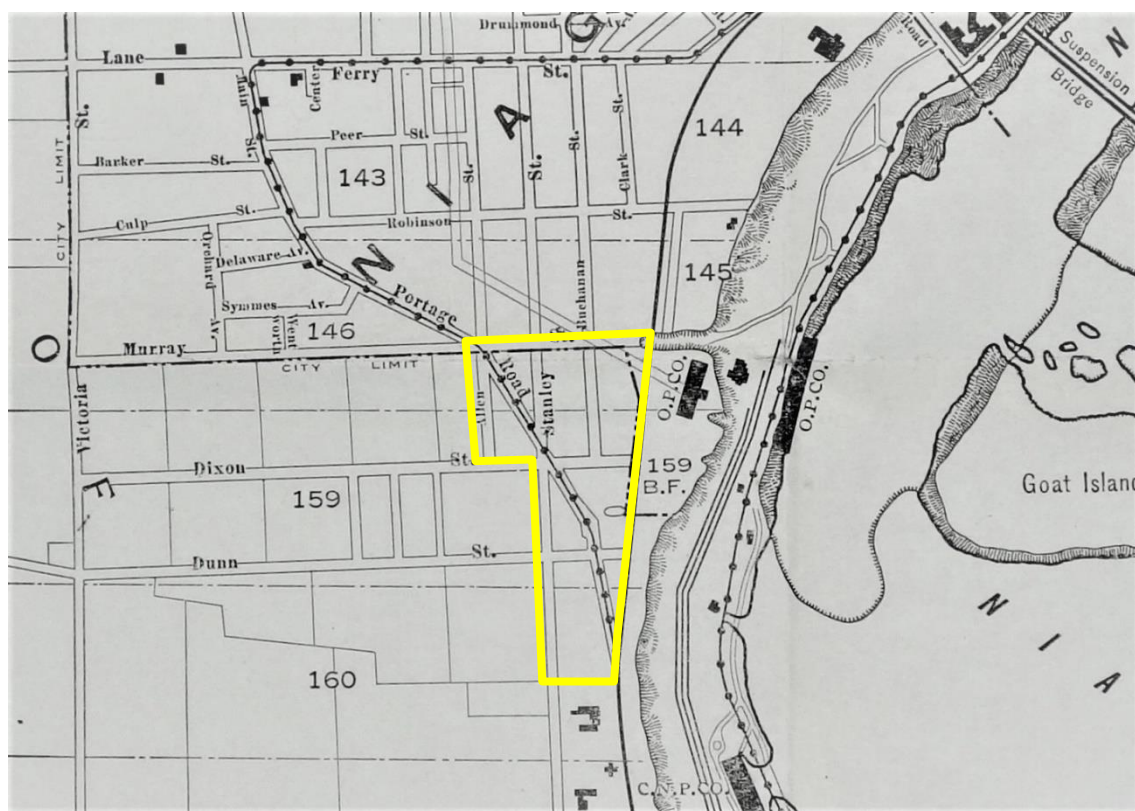


Figure IV-Eastern European settlement at Falls View

Close living quarters and alcohol obviously exacerbated the problem of violence amongst the foreign workers. In a brief report of a “fight among the Horwats at Falls View,” the newspaper recorded that the police were dispatched and a search was made for the culprits. “Out

¹⁴⁸ One of the few stories reported in the press was the following: “Two Croatians gave the police and a score of angry Italians a lively chase Monday night. It seems that some boys in “Little Italy” had called the Croatians “names” and they seized an Italian lad named Guiseppi Fosti and held him under a water tap. The shock of coming in contact with water nearly killed the Italian, and some of his older countrymen chased the Croatians to the rough-cast tenement on Main Street, at the South, where the fugitives were arrested...” They were each fined \$1.00 and costs. *Welland Tribune*, August 4, 1905.

¹⁴⁹ *Welland Tribune*, December 30, 1904, March 16, 1906, *People’s Press*, October 18, 1904, October 25, 1904, December 27, 1904, January 17, 1905, January 19, 1906.

of 48 foreigners in a shanty on Murray Street, they extracted two who had been concerned in the row.”¹⁵⁰ Contending with deleterious living conditions, and a deadly work environment, the foreign sojourner labourers (not surprisingly) often turned to drink in their free time.

And working conditions appear to have steadily deteriorated, not improved. In 1904, the push was on for Canadian Niagara Power to generate electricity by the end of the year, and the number of injuries and fatalities on the jobsite soared compared to the previous years. One catastrophic dynamite accident resulted in the deaths of at least two and left 45 injured- all foreigners. One of the dead was identified only as “the unknown Polander.”¹⁵¹ The newspaper reported that in the month of December 1904, eight workmen were killed and 20 injured in the city, while only six were injured in the whole of Welland County.¹⁵² By 1905, Toronto Power has begun construction of its powerhouse close to the brink of the Horseshoe Falls, and a frightening number of workmen met their deaths swept over the brink of the Falls.

Another man met death by being swept over the Horseshoe Falls from the power works on Tuesday morning. He was Joseph Labrossa, an Italian, 18 years old. He was in the employ of A.C. Douglass and was working on the big crib which surrounds the wheelpit of the Toronto & Niagara Power Co. He slipped on a piece of ice and fell into the river. His body never rose. His mates with poles, planks and ropes ran along the shore in the hope that he would come up and give them a chance to save him, but their effort was in vain. Labrossa’s hat was seen going over the Falls, and his body was probably close behind. Labrossa had not been out from Italy long. He boarded in this city.¹⁵³

There may be some way to determine how many workers lost their lives during the construction of the three power plants, but I have been unable to ascertain a figure. The newspaper often reported on worker deaths, but they did not report all of them.¹⁵⁴ It is doubtful that accurate mortality figures were ever kept, or that a precise total can ever be arrived at.

¹⁵⁰ *People’s Press*, March 28, 1905.

¹⁵¹ *Welland Tribune*, December 16, 1905.

¹⁵² *People’s Press*, January 17, 1905.

¹⁵³ *Welland Tribune*, January 20, 1905.

¹⁵⁴ For example, the newspaper stated that eight men had been killed in December of 1904. If a count of individual deaths reported in the press for that month is tallied, I count only five. See note 152.

According to my reckoning, between 1902 and 1907 the newspaper accounted for about 54 construction deaths: eleven Canadians, nine Americans, twenty-six foreigners, and the rest unidentified. One can only imagine the numbers of workmen who were maimed and crippled for the rest of their lives. With an interesting turn of phrase, the newspaper on January 17, 1905 observed that “Two more lives were sacrificed to the power development at the end of the week.”¹⁵⁵ The decided impression provided by the material examined for this thesis was that the foreign workers’ deaths were considered regrettable at the time, but they were an unavoidable sacrifice that had to be endured for the sake of progress. This is an aspect of the history of Niagara Falls that has barely been explored, is rarely written about, and was maybe thought best forgotten. The human cost of the power development at this time seems to have disappeared from the local historiography. Perhaps the conflagration of World War One and the larger and grander construction projects of Sir Adam Beck I and the Fourth Welland Canal later overshadowed the price paid by the workers who built these earlier engineering projects.

As previously mentioned, other than paying for short hospital stays or hurriedly arranging cut-rate funerals, the contractors and power companies accepted little responsibility for their employees. Before Ontario Hydro was organized, the three electrical generating stations in question were private companies, and really only answered to the Ontario government if they defaulted on the terms of their contracts, or if they failed to beautify Victoria Park after they had thoroughly destroyed it through construction. Worker lawsuits and strikes, however, continued to provide a constant irritation to the contractors. It would appear, however, that the courts and the law did tend to side with the contractors against the workers, especially if they were foreigners. Surprisingly, the foreigners arrested in the “riot” of late 1903 were, after spending some time in

¹⁵⁵ *People’s Press*, January 17, 1905.

the Welland jail, released subsequent to paying fines ranging for \$10.00 to \$25.00 and costs, which “were very heavy, making the penalty severe.”¹⁵⁶ The courts were very happy, much like everyone else in town, to profit from the workmen’s unlawful activities. They rarely imposed jail time for infractions, preferring instead to keep the construction workers busily employed in order to pay their fines. Lawsuits by workers, while not numerous, received a great deal of attention and had the potential to seriously cut into the profits of the contractors. Of course, most labourers had little recourse to legal prosecution, but two cases are worthy of consideration.

In May of 1905, Welland High Court heard the case of Lennon v. Canadian Niagara Power Company:

An action brought by Thos. Lennon of Niagara Falls against the Canadian Niagara Power Co. for \$10,000 damages, for loss of right leg, part of the left foot, a broken collar bone and an injury to the hip sustained while working for that company...

The jury found the defendants were negligent by not having a foreman to look after that part of the work more particularly. The plaintiff was negligent by not using greater caution, and that the plaintiff did not go into the danger voluntarily. Verdict for \$2,500 damages.¹⁵⁷

A few days later, the judge non-suited the plaintiff, due to the fact that he was also partly to blame for the accident. However, if appealed, he could possibly receive his damages. It is unclear whether Mr. Lennon appealed the decision and received any compensation.¹⁵⁸

One other remarkable case, which took years to resolve, all began due to a terrible accident which occurred in October of 1903, referred to on page 45. The accident happened in the wheel-pit of the Canadian Niagara Power jobsite, and the workers were employed by Dawson & Riley. A group of men were being lowered into the pit, riding in one of the muck buckets. About 50 feet down, the bucket tipped, and the men were dumped out, falling 137 feet

¹⁵⁶ *Welland Tribune*, November 13, 1903.

¹⁵⁷ *Welland Tribune*, May 19, 1905.

¹⁵⁸ *People’s Press*, May 23, 1905.

to the bottom. Two Hungarians and one Canadian were initially killed, and three Hungarians wounded.¹⁵⁹ Apparently two of the injured later died as well, for we read of a court case that was tried in May of 1905, Uylaki v. Dawson & Riley:

This was an action for damages against Dawson & Riley, a contracting firm working on the power works at Niagara Falls, by which five Hungarians lost their lives through the upsetting of a bucket while being lowered down a pit. Counsel for plaintiff contended that a safety hook should be used on these buckets to prevent danger. The three cases of the Hungarians were all tried together, the verdict applying to all.

His Honor, in summing up the evidence, said it was no doubt a mishap and no blame on the part of the defendants. He would therefore dismiss the action with costs.¹⁶⁰

This was the same court session in which Mr. Lennon lost his suit for damages against Canadian Niagara Power. The evidence would suggest that this judge was reluctant to find in favour of the workmen, siding instead with the employers. Of course, there was no coroner's inquiry into the death of these workers, and no recommendations or court order issued to install safety hooks on the buckets, let alone action to prevent the muck buckets from being used as human elevators.

The Hungarian relatives of the deceased, however, proved tenacious, and refused to allow this miscarriage of justice. In September of 1905, the verdict ruled in Welland by Judge Meredith in the case of Ulaki, Ulaki and Gyorgy vs. Dawson & Riley was appealed at Osgoode Hall, and in February of 1906, the Ontario Court of Appeal ordered a new trial.¹⁶¹ Finally, in November of 1906, the case was tried again in Welland, and some interesting details came to light that were not revealed earlier. Dawson & Riley had settled out of court with Uylaki, but in the cases of Gyorgy (Muskulaki) and Gyorgy (Gabor), "Justice Meredith took the case away from the jury and dismissed the two actions." The court of appeal found that the case should have been left for the jury to decide. At the new trial,

¹⁵⁹ *Welland Tribune*, October 30, 1903. The press consistently misspelt names- Reilly, Riley, Douglass, Douglas. Foreigners' names were constantly mangled as well.

¹⁶⁰ *People's Press*, May 16, 1905.

¹⁶¹ *People's Press*, September 26, 1905, February 27, 1906.

The evidence as taken at previous trial was read by Mr. Griffith, counsel for the plaintiff. The contention made by the plaintiff is that the bucket was made to handle muck and was entirely unsafe to entrust human life to, and that if a safety hook had been used the accident would not have happened.

For the defence, Mr. Reilly of Dawson & Reilly said that the hook used was the safest that could be made and he was sure the accident occurred, not through defective mechanism, but through negligence of an employee.

Mr. Tilden, the foreman, and superintendent of construction G.P. Jones, likewise testified that employee negligence was the cause of the accident. The reporter noted that, "Mr. Jones was subjected to a searching examination by His Lordship, who had trouble getting direct answers." Further witnesses for the defense testified that, while riding the muck buckets was potentially dangerous, they had no problems with using them. The case was then turned over to the jury to decide:

The jury found that the apparatus was defective for carrying human beings and it was too easily dumped; that there was negligence on the part of defendants, that reasonable care had not been used by them, that accident was caused by the bucket striking the platform and becoming unhooked, that there was no contributory negligence on part of the men killed and that under common law the mother of Gabore be awarded \$100 damages, and that the wife and child of Muskulaki be awarded \$100 damages each; costs to be paid by defendants.¹⁶²

Three years had passed since the accident, a great deal of time and money was spent going through the courts, and it was ultimately determined that the life of a Hungarian mother's son was valued at \$100; a Hungarian husband and father, \$200. To add insult to injury, the court observed,

The defendants reserve the right to move for non-suit in Toronto on the grounds that the beneficiaries in this case are non-resident aliens and consequently not entitled to any damages, Mr. Hill citing a case in British law. This is said to be the first case in Canadian law where this point has arisen.

¹⁶² *Welland Tribune*, November 23, 1906.

Dawson and Riley did appeal the verdict, and tried to weasel out of paying the damages, but the court in Toronto ruled that “aliens are entitled to the benefit of the Fatal Accidents Act,” forcing the contractor to pay the damages and costs.¹⁶³

While Canadians were extremely proud of their tradition of British law and order, it is evident that Canadian law and justice tended to discriminate against the workers; especially the foreign workers. In one extremely ridiculous case, a foreign workman who, in an impassioned disagreement with his foreman “used profane and indecent words”, was arrested, found guilty of “intent to swear”, and fined \$6.75.¹⁶⁴ Foreigners were regularly targeted by the police and the courts in many ways, ostensibly all in the name of law and order, but the extraction of fines seemed to be the primary motive. In order to get to their jobsites, the foreign workers living in Falls View had to cross the Michigan Central Railway tracks, and were routinely arrested and fined for trespassing on railway property.¹⁶⁵ Foreigners were also regularly stopped by the police on the street and searched, for no apparent reason, other than to discover concealed weapons, which resulted in an obligatory fine.¹⁶⁶ Foreign sojourner labourers were in the habit of keeping the money they had earned at work on their person, until they had accumulated a sufficient sum to wire back home.¹⁶⁷ In order to prevent being robbed of their money, many sojourners carried

¹⁶³ *People's Press*, December 11, 1906.

¹⁶⁴ *People's Press*, September 26, 1905.

¹⁶⁵ *People's Press*, December 13, 1904, *Welland Tribune*, March 25, 1910. The reeve of Stamford complained that “three hundred men from Falls View had to cross the Michigan Central every day,” and as there was no convenient street crossing, they were being arrested and fined for trespass. *People's Press*, March 21, 1905.

¹⁶⁶ The police stopped and searched foreigners if they appeared to be “a suspicious character.” *Welland Tribune*, April 29, 1904. In May 1911, an Italian jewelry vendor was searched “under the new act which gives a policeman this power,” and was found carrying a revolver. He explained that he carried the gun for protection, but he was fined \$14.25. *Welland Tribune*, May 18, 1911.

¹⁶⁷ Guiseppi Carminella was arrested “for carrying a big sharp knife. He also had \$205 tied round his leg.” *Welland Tribune*, April 26, 1907. “A local Hungarian laborer sent on Tuesday postal notes to the amount of \$800 to his native land. Guess there’s no money stringency in his family.” *Welland Tribune*, June 19, 1908. Unfortunately, I was unable to discover any evidence of the *padrone* system at work in Niagara Falls. See Zucchi, *Italians in Toronto*, 101-117.

either a knife or a gun for protection, which was against the law, and the police routinely searched and fined foreigners for carrying concealed weapons.¹⁶⁸ Police court became a lucrative side business for the city, earning \$182 in the month of July 1904.¹⁶⁹ For the year of 1905, the police court tried 660 minor offences, and collected \$3852.¹⁷⁰

Foreigners were also arrested and fined for breaking the Lord's Day Act. Some were run in by the police for working on their houses, the only opportunity for workmen to do so being on Sunday.¹⁷¹ The most common reason why foreigners were arrested on Sundays, however, was for liquor offences. If there was one thing that the church-going British Canadians most often criticized foreigners for, it was their insistence on Sunday drinking. At the Centre in May 1903, it was observed that "Foreigners around intoxicated on Sunday are quite common," as foreigners often drank and played cards on Sunday to relax and socialize, enjoying their one full day off work each week.¹⁷² Sundays were a day of legally enforced idleness, and there was practically nothing to do on the Canadian side other than go to church, so foreigners frequently gathered together for neighbourhood parties. Sometimes, the parties got out of hand, and it was these large drunken bashes on Sundays, Easter and Christmas holidays that so greatly disturbed the British Canadian residents.

The 7th Street Italian colony had an extra supply of kegs on Easter Sunday. The climax of the carnival was a stone-throwing contest with revolver accompaniment. Between 200 and 300 foreigners were in attendance as entertainers or spectators...Persons who were

¹⁶⁸ "The carrying of concealed arms by the foreign element is getting to be a serious matter," the paper reported in 1904. Foreigners were usually fined anywhere from \$5 to \$25 for carrying knives or guns. *People's Press*, May 24, 1904, December 22, 1903.

¹⁶⁹ *Welland Tribune*, August 5, 1904.

¹⁷⁰ *Welland Tribune*, January 5, 1905.

¹⁷¹ *The Niagara Falls Daily Record*, June 24, 1910, *Welland Tribune*, July 13, 1911.

¹⁷² *Welland Tribune* May 1, 1903, August 14, 1903, August 31, 1911. The newspaper reported "Almost every house in Little Italy and other foreign sections gets in a keg or two [of beer] on Saturday night." *People's Press*, May 9, 1905.

near the riot say fully thirty-five shots were fired, but the shooters were very drunk and made bad marksmen.¹⁷³

The most vocal advocates of temperance were usually adherents of the Protestant denominations, the same laymen and ministers who also filled the ranks of The Lord's Day Alliance. In Niagara Falls, as well as throughout Welland County, these defenders of Christian values and public morality fought pitched battles with the hotelmen and merchants over the issuance of liquor licenses, temperance legislation and operation of tourism related businesses on Sunday. In their opinion, foreign workers and alcohol were a volatile mix that required control, and they set about to do so by pressuring the lawmakers through vocal citizens groups. Local temperance forces were outraged that Niagara Falls held seven times more hotel licenses per capita than the city of Toronto, and they waged unremitting warfare against the tourism and liquor industry on this issue.¹⁷⁴ When the county board in charge of issuing liquor licenses met in 1905, Alex McLeod's application for a liquor license for his hotel at Falls View met with fierce opposition:

Rev. J.W. Magwood, pastor Methodist church, Niagara Falls said it would be a menace to public peace and safety to grant a license in that district, where a murder had already been committed...The churches, with the exception of perhaps one, the best men of the city, and the Stamford Conservative Association are all against granting this license...Rev. G.H. Sneyd, Baptist church pastor, confined his remarks to the fact that another hotel is not necessary. The people were mostly foreigners: if they knew when to stop drinking it would be different, but they keep on until they get beastly drunk.¹⁷⁵

A few months later, Stamford township council received a petition asking for a local option bylaw, which would effectively make Stamford dry, but nothing came of it.¹⁷⁶ In the city elections of 1911, the forces of temperance placed a local option bylaw before the voters of

¹⁷³ *Welland Tribune*, April 28, 1905.

¹⁷⁴ *The Welland Telegraph*, February 15, 1910.

¹⁷⁵ Interestingly, the \$700 mortgage on the building was held by Taylor & Bates brewery. *People's Press*, April 25, 1905.

¹⁷⁶ *Welland Tribune*, October 6, 1905.

Niagara Falls, which was resoundingly defeated. “The solid Italian vote against local option in division No. 6 was responsible, it is claimed, for the adverse majority.”¹⁷⁷

Foreign boarding houses often found themselves running afoul of the liquor laws of the province. The police apparently had no need for search warrants, and they frequently went snooping around foreigners’ houses to see what they could find.¹⁷⁸ Usually what they found were large quantities of liquor, which led to suspicions that the boarding house “boss” or owner was selling liquor without a license; such a dwelling commonly referred to as a “blind pig”.¹⁷⁹ In 1903, Joe Critelli’s boarding house on Ferry Street was raided by the police and he was fined \$50 because he “allowed liquor to be consumed on the premises.”¹⁸⁰ Merely possessing large quantities of liquor prompted police raids, seizure of the liquor, and fines.¹⁸¹ It was in the power of the arresting officer to decide how much alcohol was “too much” for any one household, a definition having no established means of measurement.¹⁸²

For violating the liquor law, by having on the premises more beer than the authorities believed was needed for his family use, Rocco Pretullo was fined \$40 and costs in police court on Monday morning. He entered a plea of guilty. At the home of Pretullo the police found fifty full bottles and two empty cases. They took the boardinghouse keeper to headquarters. The empties were in the house, but two full cases of beer were safely

¹⁷⁷ *Welland Tribune*, January 5, 1911.

¹⁷⁸ “Sunday- The Ontario Police made an inspection of about thirty houses inhabited by Polocks, Hungarians, Italians, Austrians and other foreigners. They found everything in very satisfactory condition.” *People’s Press*, September 22, 1903.

¹⁷⁹ Two foreigners were arrested at Falls View and fined for selling liquor without a license, presumably from separate boardinghouses. The newspaper wistfully observed, “It certainly seems a little inconsistent that Falls View, perhaps the most noted and beautiful scenic standpoint in the world, should be made a blind piggery.” *People’s Press*, April 26, 1910.

¹⁸⁰ On appeal, the Judge overturned police Magistrate Cruickshank’s decision, as “Critelli’s place was not a place of public entertainment and therefore the section under which the conviction was made did not apply.” *People’s Press*, February 9, 1904, July 13, 1903.

¹⁸¹ *Welland Tribune*, January 21, 1910. In January 1910, police visited Joseph Biolcie’s house and found a sleigh full of beer and whiskey; no mention was made of any attempt on his part to sell. He was charged for selling liquor without a license and fined \$100. *The Welland Telegraph*, January 11, 1910.

¹⁸² See Roger Fast, *Welland and its Immigrant Community*, 19, 20.

stowed away in a clump of pepper plants in the garden. This is Pretullo's second conviction under the liquor act.¹⁸³

Entrapment tactics were also used to arrest and charge foreigners selling liquor without a license, and the fines imposed far outweighed the trivial nature of the offences:

This morning before Magistrate Fraser, Joseph Morphy an Italian living on Sixth Street, was charged with violating the liquor license law by selling Regal beer to another Italian called Strangas. From the evidence given Stragras went to Morphy's house on Saturday last, accompanied by two policemen in plain clothes and bought four bottles of beer which he brought away in a bag.

The officers then tried to buy two bottles of beer from Morphy, but he was tipped off that they were the law, and he told the officers he had none. One officer then proceeded to search the house and found "a number of bottles of beer in two tubs of ice." In police court, Morphy,

Acknowledged having the beer...in his cellar, but said that it was for his own and his friend's use. In summing up the case the Magistrate said the evidence of the prosecution was too strong and direct to be outweighed by Morphy's denial, and he inflicted a penalty of \$100 and costs or three months hard labour. It is understood that Morphy will pay the fine.¹⁸⁴

Very rarely, foreigners offered resistance to the police when they felt the situation warranted it.

In April 1910, the police raided the shacks at Falls View one Saturday and seized a quantity of liquor, but the irate foreigners attacked the police and recovered their booze. The police thought it prudent to retreat, and arrested the offenders the following Monday.¹⁸⁵ British Canadian residents would sometime stick up for foreigners who were unjustly intimidated by the police. In 1905, off duty patrolman Carson, who had imbibed "a few drinks", went into the Grand Trunk terminal and started to harass two foreigners who were innocently waiting for a train. Several bystanders intervened on the foreigners' behalf which enraged the officer, and he hauled the two foreigners off to jail and locked them up. Investigation proved the foreigners had done nothing wrong, so they were released by the Chief of Police and Carson was suspended pending an

¹⁸³ *Welland Tribune*, September 28, 1911.

¹⁸⁴ It is striking that on page 60, a man's life was valued at \$100; in this instance, four bottles of beer were valued at the same amount. *The Niagara Falls Daily Record*, July 13, 1911.

¹⁸⁵ *Welland Tribune*, April 21, 1910.

inquiry.¹⁸⁶ There appears to have been no outright cases of police corruption reported in the press, but one complaint was made in 1911 that may have been true. An investigation was held into the conduct of officer Pay of the Ontario Police detachment in the city after a downtown liquor merchant had accused Pay of not allowing his goods to be sold to the “Hungarians at Falls View”. The shop owner claimed that officer Pay would only allow the liquor of a rival distributor to be sold to the foreigners. An inspector was duly sent from Toronto and investigated the matter, but the charges were quietly dismissed.¹⁸⁷

The creation of the City of Niagara Falls in 1904 promised the beginning of a new era of prosperity for the local inhabitants. While incorporation did bring about some improvements for the residents, some issues such as the housing shortage for workers still remained a problem. Labour conditions on the power development projects were as bad (if not worse) as ever, with employers accepting little responsibility for the health and welfare of their employees. Foreign workers were not only exploited on the jobsite, but they regularly faced discrimination by the courts and harassment by the police and city officials. Sometimes foreigners fought back against state imposed discrimination, but such resistance was quickly quelled by the power of the courts and the police.

¹⁸⁶ *People's Press*, September 26, 1905.

¹⁸⁷ *Welland Tribune*, March 9, 1911.

CHAPTER IV- INDUSTRY AND FOREIGN RESIDENTS

Industrialization of the area provided foreign sojourner labourers opportunities to settle in Niagara Falls and become naturalized citizens. Foreigners who did settle in the city were more likely to be accepted by the British Canadian residents according to the degree of their assimilation; manifested by their naturalization as citizens, their involvement in local politics and willingness to send their children to public school. Italians and other foreigners, however, continued to be racialized by the press, especially those inhabiting the distinct ethnic enclaves of “Little Italy” and Falls View. The morals and behavior of the foreign community remained a source of entertainment and concern for the British Canadian inhabitants of the city.

By the terms set out in their contract, Canadian Niagara Power was required to generate electricity by 1905, and the company formally began operation January 2, 1905 to loud fanfare in the press.¹⁸⁸ Ontario Power was completed soon thereafter, and conducted a test of its facilities in July of the same year.¹⁸⁹ While the lion’s share of the electricity generated by these two stations was earmarked for American consumption, a specific amount was set aside for Canadian use, and it was after 1905 that Niagara Falls and Welland began to attract industrial development due to the availability of inexpensive electrical power.

With construction winding down, there was no longer a need for unskilled labourers, and massive lay-offs of construction workers began in the spring of 1905. Many foreign sojourner labourers left the city in search of work elsewhere. The newspaper reported in May, “There was a big exodus of foreigners to North Bay last week. The power works are now so far advanced

¹⁸⁸ *Welland Tribune*, January 6, 1905.

¹⁸⁹ *Welland Tribune*, July 7, 1905.

that the gangs of labourers have to be reduced, as the work is now of a nature that requires skilled men.”¹⁹⁰ While most of the unskilled sojourner labourers left the area to find other jobs, a significant number decided to stay, took up residence in the city and became citizens. Before 1901, few people were naturalized at the Welland County courthouse each year, and not many were Italian or Eastern European immigrants.¹⁹¹ At this time, people who were naturalized actually became British subjects, even though the census and the press referred to their nationality as Canadian. In order to become citizens, applicants had to prove that they had resided in the country for a minimum of three years. It comes as no surprise, then, that naturalization rates for the area exploded after 1905. Of the fifty people who became citizens at the June 1905 sitting of county court in Welland, the newspaper reported that forty-five were “Italians of Niagara Falls.”¹⁹² As construction on the power plants wound down in 1906, the newspaper informed readers that the population of Niagara Falls had actually grown, despite the exodus of sojourner labourers.

The figures regarding population are gratifying and finally disprove and dispose of the “wolf” cry heard from so many people and some newspapers that the city’s population was decreasing. The figures show that the emigration of foreign laborers who have gone away in thousands, has been more than balanced by the incoming permanent residents. There is a net increase in the population of 101.¹⁹³

By all accounts, the Niagara Falls newspaper correspondent to the *Tribune* was quite pleased to see these “Italians who throughout the county have recently sworn allegiance to King Edward,” and “who subscribed to fight for the flag, and turned their backs on Sunny Italy” become new

¹⁹⁰ *Welland Tribune*, May 19, 1905, *People’s Press*, March 7, 1905. Apparently there was railroad construction work to be had in North Bay. *People’s Press*, February 27, 1906.

¹⁹¹ County court sat twice a year, with naturalizations taking place at that time. At the December sitting in 1900, merely 12 people became citizens in Welland County; none of the names appearing to be “foreign”. Walter C. Hodge and Clarence Spence were the only residents of Niagara Falls who were naturalized at that time. *Welland Tribune*, December 14, 1900.

¹⁹² Interestingly, only men swore the oath of citizenship. *The Welland Telegraph*, June 15, 1905, *Welland Tribune*, June 16, 1905.

¹⁹³ *Welland Tribune*, May 4, 1906.

Canadians.¹⁹⁴ The editor of *The Welland Telegraph*, however, took a more jaundiced view of the situation:

A number of foreigners were given naturalization papers at the County Court on Tuesday. This brings to mind the seriousness of allowing the Italians in this county a vote at all. It gives them a right to a say in the Government of the country, something which only clear thinking upright sons of Canada are rightfully entitled to do. Little do the foreigners care who does or does not govern the land. It is no more right that they should have a vote than the Indian, the founder of this country.¹⁹⁵

But citizens and voters they became. In the provincial election of 1905, the local Liberal candidate, Joseph Battle, who had some sort of connection to construction on the power development, ran on the platform that he was “the workingman’s candidate”. In January of 1905, Mr. Battle left no stone unturned in his search for support, and he thought it worthwhile to reach out to the newly created Canadian voters within the Italian immigrant community of the city.

A unique election meeting was held on Monday night at Cretelli’s new brick building on Ferry Street, near Stanley, at the door of Little Italy, in the interests of Mr. Battle. The foreign residents of the fourth ward turned out in force and the fifth ward sent a large quota. Scalzo’s band was in attendance and music and fireworks were features of the evening. A meeting especially for the foreigners is a new development in politics here.¹⁹⁶

The foreigners who settled in Niagara Falls appear to have taken their civic responsibilities seriously. Rocco Cupolo (Frank Bell) “the well-known Italian Boss” was made a county constable as early as 1903, and in the city elections of 1907, it was mooted that Joseph Critelli would most likely run as a candidate for alderman in the fourth ward.¹⁹⁷ The foreign immigrants were also anxious to see their children attend public school, and did not willingly keep them out of the classroom:

A pleasing development of opinion among the permanent foreign population is shown by the attitude of the Italians towards the school question. Many Italian children are among those who are now attending school only half days because of the congestion. It has occurred that when an Italian child was sent home its mother brought it back to school and demanded to know why it should not be kept there all day. The foreigners show

¹⁹⁴ *Welland Tribune*, June 14, 1907.

¹⁹⁵ *The Welland Telegraph*, December 19, 1909.

¹⁹⁶ *Welland Tribune*, January 27, 1905, January 10, 1905.

¹⁹⁷ *People’s Press*, June 2, 1903, *Welland Tribune*, December 21, 1906.

really more concern than the native born people in the school situation. Many foreigners voted for the late-lamented library bylaw. Shall we deny these knowledge-seeking children of the south all the education they want in this boasted, enlightened, liberal and free land of ours?¹⁹⁸

Keeping children out of school in order to work and help support the family seems to have not been a problem amongst the immigrant community of Niagara Falls. When a complaint was made to the police in 1905 that children under the age of fourteen were employed by the Ontario Silver Company during school hours, the police investigated and found it to be totally unfounded. They did find that some boys under fourteen worked there after school hours, however that was not a concern.¹⁹⁹

Industrial development after the electricity started to flow in 1905 afforded the residents of the city job opportunities, which further induced foreign labourers to settle in the city. Industries such as the Carborundum, Acheson Graphite, the Canadian Ethnate Company and the American Cyanamid Co. located in Niagara Falls soon after 1905, as their production processes were all dependent on large quantities of electrical energy to manufacture their products.²⁰⁰ Other manufacturers also opened their doors after 1905, including the Canadian Shredded Wheat Co., the Niagara Falls Canning Co, the Sanitary Can Co. and the Thompson & Norris Co. all within the heart of “Little Italy” at the Centre.²⁰¹ On the outskirts of the city, the Bissel Carpet Sweeper Co., the Ramapo Iron Works in Stamford, and a host of manufacturing concerns in “Silvertown” all started operations before 1911. The 1911 City Directory listed twenty-four companies located within the city, and a number of them employed over 100 workers. In 1911, *The Niagara Falls Daily Record* ran a series of articles on the city’s manufacturers, and noted of the Cyanamid that,

¹⁹⁸ *People’s Press*, November 12, 1907. See also *Welland Tribune*, March 16, 1906. The census records reveal that many parents were illiterate and spoke only Italian. It would have been advantageous for the family to have a child who could read and write English.

¹⁹⁹ *People’s Press*, October 24, 1904.

²⁰⁰ *People’s Press*, January 9, 1906, August 18, 1908. *Welland Tribune*, March 9, 1906,

²⁰¹ *Vernon’s Niagara Falls City Directory 1911*, (Hamilton: Vernon Directories Ltd. 1911).

“About 150 men are steadily employed at the works” in three shifts of “but eight hours per day”.²⁰² While factory work could prove hazardous at times, it was steadier, and working conditions were infinitely superior to those of the construction jobs formerly available.²⁰³

Factory work also afforded new job opportunities for women. While the tourist industry and domestic service jobs still required female workers, positions for “girls” were advertised by Niagara Paper Box, Niagara Neckwear, the Dominion Suspender Co, the Sanitary Can Co. and the Spirella Corset Company.²⁰⁴ Women also held jobs across the river on the American side.²⁰⁵ One very good question remains to be answered, which this study has failed to address: “How many (if any) newly arrived female foreigners residing in Niagara Falls worked outside the home during this time?” Frustratingly, up to 1911, I have been unable to find little evidence. According to the 1911 census data, only two Italian women were reported as working outside of the home, and circumstances forced this widow and her 16 year old daughter to work as domestics in order to support themselves.²⁰⁶ For Eastern Europeans, the census reports eight young single women working: seven Poles/Russians working as domestics in hotels, and one 16 year old Jewish girl working as a sewer in a shirt factory.²⁰⁷ While the census forms provided spaces to report part-time and other occasional work, the census takers almost never filled in these columns. It would appear that either the census takers were not interested in either men or women who worked part time, or the respondents themselves did not see any point in reporting occasional work. A few

²⁰² *The Niagara Falls Daily Record*, March 3, 1911.

²⁰³ The Cyanamid was prone to explosions and workers being burned. “The work is very warm and laborious.” *Welland Tribune*, August 6, 1909, *Pepole’s Press*, November 16, 1909.

²⁰⁴ *People’s Press*, March 31, 1903, *The Niagara Falls Daily Record*, October 9, 1909, June 9, 1910, June 15, 1910, June 23, 1910, March 11, 1911.

²⁰⁵ *Welland Tribune*, March 4, 1910.

²⁰⁶ See Bruno Ramirez, *The Italians in Canada* No. 14 in *Canada’s Ethnic Groups*, (Ottawa : Canadian Historical Association , 1989), pages 12-13. My findings support Ramirez’s assertion that first generation Italian immigrant women did not work outside the home in Canada before World War One.

²⁰⁷ “1911 Census of Canada”.

odd clues are reported by the press, however there is not much solid evidence to suggest that many female foreigners worked outside the home at this time.²⁰⁸

Marriage and nuclear family units appear to have been much more common amongst the Italian immigrants than the Eastern Europeans. While Italian men outnumbered women two to one in 1911, there were still over two hundred Italian females who lived in the city, with a number of single potential brides-to-be who lived at home with their parents. The sex imbalance among the Austro-Hungarians who lived at Falls View, on the other hand, was truly remarkable; females numbered less than twenty- all married women and young children, compared to about 180 males.²⁰⁹ The Eastern European immigrants (with the exception of the Russian Jews) tended to be mostly sojourner male labourers. As described by Harney and others, Italian immigrants relied heavily upon extended familial connections and “chain migration”, which often provided more opportunity for Italian male sojourners to marry, settle in the New World and start families.²¹⁰ Sometimes, the connections they made with fellow-workers resulted in matrimonial arrangements:

A young Italian residing in this city made acquaintance with two other Italians working at the quarries, who had a sister residing in Italy. The young Italian made arrangements with the two brothers to have the sister come out here, and that he would pay her passage over with the provision that if he liked the girl when he saw her, he would marry her. If not, the two brothers were to refund him the passage money.

²⁰⁸ In August of 1911, there is a report of “The Italian women who indulged in the free fight at the South End on Thursday, in which dinner pails played a prominent part...” The presence of dinner pails may suggest they were on their way either to or from work. In 1910, Miss Annie Smith, described as “a recent arrival from Italy...who is a domestic in a River Road home”, caused a commotion when she mistook the city fire alarm box for a mailbox. *People’s Press*, August 29, 1911, *People’s Press*, February 15, 1910.

²⁰⁹ “1911 Census of Canada,”.

²¹⁰ Robert F. Harney, “Men without Women”, 218, 219. Robert F. Harney, *From the Shores of Hardship: Italians in Canada*, ed. Nicholas De Maria Harney (Welland: éditions SOLEIL publishing inc., 1993), 134-135. See also, Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, *Family and Community: Italian Immigrants in Buffalo 1880-1930* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1977).

The girl arrived on Tuesday and was met by the two brothers and her future husband with the result that it was a case of "Love at first sight." The day was spent in arranging preliminaries and Thursday the couple were wed in Buffalo.²¹¹

As mentioned previously, married foreign couples did often take in boarders, and while the wife may not have technically worked outside of the home, if she took in enough boarders, it would have been a full time job cooking and washing for the men, as well as taking care of her own family; especially if she only had a wood stove, no washing machine and no hot running water. Most Italian households took in boarders (57%), and while the average number was 3.03 boarders per household, couples often took in more. For instance, in 1911, Rose Benese and her husband had a one year old son of their own, and put up nine boarders in their house. The Eastern Europeans at Falls View, however, kept quite large boarding houses. Hungarians Mike and Fanny Horgeice had a three year old son, and also kept twenty three boarders in their house.²¹² Immigrant women also helped their husbands run businesses. Mrs. Quagliariello was a well-known figure on Centre Street for many years, running the family fruit and grocery store.²¹³ Mrs. Fotina also ran a store on South Main Street.²¹⁴

Very rarely, women and girls would delve into prostitution, but this appears to have not been the case with the immigrant women.²¹⁵ Foreign women, however, were frequently the butt of humorous stories in the press, often portrayed as fierce and violent Amazons; the total opposite of respectable Victorian Canadian ladies. Mrs. Quagliariello, in a verbal dispute with

²¹¹ *People's Press*, March 28, 1911.

²¹² "1911 Census of Canada". As well as all the work involved, female householders sometimes had to contend with amorous attentions and advances from their young male boarders. See Appendix V.

²¹³ *Welland Tribune*, August 8, 1902.

²¹⁴ *People's Press*, September 29, 1903.

²¹⁵ "One of the most revolting cases ever heard in the Niagara Falls police court was up on Tuesday morning. Mrs. Young and her daughter Mary, aged less than 14 years, were charged with being prostitutes." Two foreigners were mentioned as being customers. *Welland Tribune*, October 21, 1904. See also *Welland Tribune* March 23, 1911. Raids on disorderly houses appear to have been more frequent in Niagara Falls, N.Y. than Niagara Falls, Ont. See *People's Press*, October 4, 1904; *Welland Tribune*, March 19, 1909.

one of her male customers, slugged him and knocked him out cold with one punch.²¹⁶ In an argument over payment for a plug of tobacco with Mr. Petronia Falvitore, Mrs. Fotina appeared in police court because she “smashed him in the teeth with a big rock.”²¹⁷ Boarding house operator Elizabeth Gaz of Falls View, found herself in police court in 1909 for “pointing a revolver at two of her fellow-countrymen” during a game of cards and shooting it into the floor.²¹⁸ Stefana Muselin was arrested after “a drunken Hungarian brawl” at Falls View in which Mary Tern was cut across the forehead “with a dangerous looking knife.”²¹⁹ Foreigner women were also fined in police court for using abusive language against each other.²²⁰ Mary Bell was a frequent visitor to the police court from 1903 to 1906, who possessed “a notoriously foul tongue and a hot temper”, and was described in the press as being “part Spanish and part colored and has a Dago husband, and is the best known police court character in the city.”²²¹ Women’s liaisons with men other than their husbands were also grist for the press, “the morals of the foreign elements of the population” being simultaneously a source of condemnation and salacious titillation to Victorian Canadians’ standards of propriety.²²² In one strange case, the Children’s Aid Society and the police stepped in to take Mrs. Annie Lewis’s four year old son away from her. She was “living with an Italian named Angelo Rossi” and the inspector, Mr. Black, did not “consider the home a proper place to bring up the boy.”²²³ Both the Children’s Aid Society and “the indigent committee” would step in to take care of foreigners’ children or remove them from the home if they felt the situation warranted it. One of the first cases of

²¹⁶ *Welland Tribune*, August 8, 1902.

²¹⁷ *People’s Press*, September 29, 1903.

²¹⁸ *Welland Tribune*, December 10, 1909.

²¹⁹ *Welland Tribune*, May 29, 1908.

²²⁰ *Welland Tribune*, June 23, 1905.

²²¹ *Welland Tribune*, September 4, 1906, December 21, 1906, September 18, 1903. Newspaper editors often provided humorous entertainment for their readers, often at the expense of foreigners or others who lived on the fringe of genteel society. For examples of this type of “journalism”, see Appendix V.

²²² *Welland Tribune*, May 10, 1907. See Appendix V.

²²³ *Welland Tribune*, October 29, 1909.

foreigner child abuse to be publicized was that of Mark Mundier and his nine year old daughter Mary, who lived on Stanley Avenue just outside of town in Stamford. The paper explained that “Mundier is an Italian, his wife is English,” and detailed a horrific tale of physical abuse and “Other points...beyond relation.”²²⁴ Child abuse was not much reported in the press, but there must have been a substantial number of suspected “cruel, drunken dissolute parents” locally, as Inspector Black investigated 287 cases in 1911.²²⁵

Another question remains largely unanswered for this time period, namely, “Where did the foreign immigrants turn in times of trouble, when they needed help?” Usually, the answer for this era would be the churches, but up to 1911, neither the Italian nor Eastern European immigrants had established any churches in town. As early as February 1902, the press reported that, “The Italians have a large sum already subscribed for their new church,” and intended to build it that spring.²²⁶ In 1910, we read that the church still had not been built, and that new plans had been drawn up by a local architect “for an Italian Catholic church to be constructed on Seventh Street above the Shredded Wheat concern.” St. Anne’s was not apparently built until 1913.²²⁷ Catholics living in the south end of the city worshipped at Mount Carmel at Falls View, with some sporadic provision being made for the Italian members of the congregation.²²⁸ There appears to have been a Polish church in Niagara Falls N.Y. that welcomed Poles working on this side of the river.²²⁹ Once, at least, “A Hungarian Presbyterian minister from Buffalo preached to a congregation of his countrymen from the power works in Drummond Hill Presbyterian

²²⁴ *People’s Press*, April 14, 1903. See also *People’s Press*, April 21, 1903, June 14, 1907 *Welland Tribune*, June 16, 1903, November 20, 1903, December 17, 1909.

²²⁵ *Welland Tribune*, March 23, 1911.

²²⁶ *Welland Tribune*, February 28, 1902.

²²⁷ Seibel, *Niagara Falls; A History*, 122.

²²⁸ “The Rev. Frederick Sprocca, pastor of St. Lucie’s Italian Catholic church, Scranton Pa., accepted the pastorate of the new Mt. Carmel church at Falls View...This parish was only recently organized to meet the needs of the rapidly increasing Italian population.” *People’s Press*, July 17, 1906. See also Seibel, *Niagara Falls; A History*, 122.

²²⁹ *People’s Press*, December 22, 1903.

church,” but it is unknown if any of the local Protestant denominations did anything in the way of reaching out to the foreign immigrants of Niagara Falls.²³⁰ As far as fraternal groups, mention has been made of “Scalzo’s band” which appears to have been an Italian group of musicians in the city, but again, at this early date the historical records are silent.²³¹ One line in the newspaper dated 1909 noted that, “In Niagara Falls, N.Y., the Italians have organized for the purpose of protecting their interests,” and left it at that with no further explanation.²³²

The Italian communities on both sides of the river appear to have had both commercial and social dealings with each other.²³³ Sometimes the dealings were illegal, such as the smuggling of goods and people across the border.²³⁴ There were even reports of Mafia-like extortion rings (the “Black Hand”, “Three Hours”, or the “Italian Anarchist Society”) which had possible ties to the U.S. and purportedly demanded cash of Italians living in Niagara Falls.²³⁵ Commenting on a boarding house stabbing soon after the strike/“riot” of 1903, the newspaper went as far as to speculate: “It has been remarked on more than one previous occasion that there seemed to be some unseen power working among and controlling certain of the Italians. This second seemed very apparent at the time of the strike riots, and on different occasions when Italians have been arrested.”²³⁶ Sometimes the foreign residents were accused of being secretive; keeping to themselves and dealing out their own brand of justice, especially the Eastern European workers:

The laborers at Falls View are of a race of Bohemians similar to the Gypsies. They are silent men, with many clans and societies among themselves. Feuds among them are not

²³⁰ *Welland Tribune*, March 24, 1905. Rev. Father O’Neil “of the Monastery” did apparently reach out to the workers residing in the Falls View area in 1910. *The Niagara Falls Daily Record*, June 24, 1910.

²³¹ See page 68.

²³² *People’s Press*, February 9, 1909.

²³³ *People’s Press*, January 25, 1910, *Welland Tribune*, June 15, 1911.

²³⁴ *Welland Tribune*, December 6, 1910, January 26, 1911, August 17, 1911.

²³⁵ *Welland Tribune*, February 19, 1904, March 23, 1906; *People’s Press*, February 24, 1904, April 3, 1906.

²³⁶ *People’s Press*, February 16, 1904.

infrequent and when they once have cause to hate, their wrath is undying and they live only for vengeance.²³⁷

This statement, however, would appear to be an exaggeration. For the most part, the foreigners were not shy about asking the authorities for help, and the state did respond. In yet another case of purported “Black Hand” extortion, an Italian resident who was threatened went to the police for help, and the authorities took the unusual step of allowing him to carry a revolver for protection.²³⁸ In 1910, Papino Stranchez, “a foreigner”, was taken to court and “charged with non-support by his wife. The court ordered him to pay \$3 a week or go to jail.”²³⁹ While the sum was a pittance, the judgement reveals the fact that the foreigners did attempt to make use of the courts to their own advantage. The city indigent committee often took charge of penniless foreigners, or sometimes hospital expenses were paid by their “boarding boss”. City councilmen grumbled about paying hospital or undertaker’s fees submitted by the indigent committee, but they did pay.²⁴⁰ In one case, Father Dion of the Monastery of Mount Carmel took in a sick and destitute Hungarian labourer from Falls View.²⁴¹ Sometimes, foreign sojourner labourers were lured to destinations by unscrupulous or bogus immigration agents, only to arrive with no money and find out that there were no jobs available.²⁴² During the winter months, this led to extreme hardship and privation. In February of 1908, the newspaper reported on the dire straits which many foreign workers found themselves in due to lack of work, and noted that many were too proud to ask for charity. An appeal was made to the public in support of a local aid organization

²³⁷ *The Daily Record*, June 27, 1910.

²³⁸ *Welland Tribune*, March 23, 1911.

²³⁹ *Welland Tribune*, September 8, 1910.

²⁴⁰ *Welland Tribune*, June 16, 1905; *People’s Press*, June 27, 1905.

²⁴¹ *Welland Tribune*, April 13, 1906.

²⁴² *Welland Telegraph*, April 22, 1910.

to help these unfortunates.²⁴³ While foreign labourers came to Niagara Falls looking for work, they did not actively seek or expect handouts from city hall in times of distress.

When the generating stations began to produce electricity in 1905, industries soon flocked to the area to take advantage of the cheap and readily available power. The new industries provided different sorts of job opportunities for itinerant foreign labourers, attracting some to seek factory work and settle in the city and country permanently. Census statistics provide information on the composition of “foreign” households around this time, revealing the importance of lodgers and boarding to both foreign workers and householders. As more foreigners settled in the city, the press kept up a steady stream of reports which sensationalized the aberrant behavior of foreigners, which reinforced racial stereotypes held by British Canadians. While racialized and discriminated against, the resident foreign population did slowly reach an accommodation with the state, no matter how grudgingly it was conceded.

²⁴³ *People's Press*, February 11, 1908.

PART V- RENEWED ELECTRICAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE 1911 CENSUS

A new influx of itinerant labourers to the city after 1909 reveals a differentiation in attitudes displayed by British Canadian residents toward sojourners and resident foreigners; most especially between the resident Italian community and the Eastern European sojourners residing at Falls View. During times of crisis, however, concerns regarding morality and public health were expressed indiscriminately towards all foreigners. The 1911 census reports considerable demographic change within the city compared to the census of the area conducted in 1901, most notably in the number of new ethnic groups who now resided in the area. The 1911 census shows that the Italian community in Niagara Falls for the most part took root around the nascent Italian immigrant community present in 1901.

By 1909 many new industries had opened in the city, attracting more people to take up residence in the area. In 1909, the population had risen to 8200; a slow but steady increase had marked each year since 1905.²⁴⁴ Not everyone who lived in Niagara Falls, Ontario necessarily worked in the industries on this side of the border however. In 1909, a controversy was raised in the American press regarding Canadians employed in American factories across the river. Niagara Falls N.Y. city council went so far as to unanimously pass a resolution instructing the city clerk to bring the issue to the attention of the Secretary of State or to the appropriate officials and put a stop to the practice. It was estimated at the time that anywhere from 500 to 700 Canadian men and women were employed in Niagara Falls N.Y. factories.²⁴⁵ Upon investigation,

²⁴⁴ *Welland Tribune*, June 2, 1905, May 4, 1906, October 4, 1907, April 6, 1911.

²⁴⁵ *Welland Tribune*, April 2, 1909; September 17, 1909.

it was found that there was no law in place to forbid the practice, so American immigration officers took no action.²⁴⁶

One subject that both American and Canadian immigration officials were extremely concerned with, however, was the admission of either destitute or diseased foreigners into their respective countries. Niagara Falls was a thoroughfare for many people travelling to and from New York, Chicago, or those making connections into Canada. Sojourner labourers were extremely mobile, criss-crossing North America in a perpetual search for work, and most all foreigners were closely scrutinized by immigration officials. In contrast to American or Canadian residents, sojourner labourers were required to pay a head tax when entering either country in their search for work. In the U.S., it was a nominal sum of \$4, but in April 1908, the Canadian government levied a \$25 tax, and in 1910 required any adult foreigner entering the country to prove they had \$50 in their pockets at the time of entry.²⁴⁷ Foreign immigrants entering either country were also examined for infectious diseases, most especially trachoma. Foreigners on both sides of the border were regularly stopped from entering the country if they showed signs of trachoma; this prompted accusations in Niagara Falls that the city was being turned into a dumping ground for diseased foreigners by American officials.²⁴⁸ The Americans, for their part, went as far as to arrest foreigners with trachoma entering the country and confine them to the “pest house.”²⁴⁹ Foreigners turned back at the border in this fashion often became stranded. In one case, a family of Italians with seven children was forced to leave their one

²⁴⁶ *Welland Tribune*, September 24, 1909; *People's Press*, October 5, 1909.

²⁴⁷ *Welland Tribune*, July 5, 1907, November 3, 1910; *People's Press*, April 28, 1908.

²⁴⁸ *Welland Tribune*, April 11, 1902, May 2, 1902; *People's Press*, May 20, 1902, January 5, 1904, September 26, 1905, October 24, 1905.

²⁴⁹ *Welland Tribune*, April 17, 1903.

infected child behind in Canada while they continued their journey to the United States.²⁵⁰ In order to evade immigration officials, foreign workers would find ways to smuggle themselves across the border; by boat in the summer or in the winter by making a hazardous trip across the ice bridge below the Falls.²⁵¹

Sojourner labourers received good news in the fall of 1909, when Ontario Power began construction on the second phase of their development, employing about 500 men.²⁵² Very quickly, both the city and the Falls View area of Stamford witnessed boarding houses and “shanties” filled with foreign workers, and the city once again experienced a housing shortage for the men.²⁵³ By March of 1910, it was reported that 650 men were at work on the project, and that “more laborers would be required in the future.”²⁵⁴ The paper reported that there was a boom in shacks at Falls View, and that plans were being made to construct enough “to accommodate 2,000 foreigners who will be required for works in the vicinity.”²⁵⁵ The newspaper also made the cryptic remark that “It is the intention to house the men in communities by themselves,” but as previously, I can find no evidence that Ontario Power provided segregated living accommodations for their men. Shacks were indeed put up in Falls View, but they appear to have been privately owned.²⁵⁶ As before, most of the foreign workers chose to segregate themselves

²⁵⁰ *People's Press*, January 5, 1904. In 1908, seven “Bulgarian tramps” who had travelled from 100 miles north of Cobalt in search of work, were turned back at the U.S. border. They “landed here after a two weeks’ tramp, hungry, ragged and footsore” and were lodged in the city jail. *People's Press*, July 28, 1908.

²⁵¹ *People's Press*, January 17, 1905; *Welland Telegraph*, March 2, 1911, August 17, 1911. In one case, a Canadian employer from Hamilton was fined for smuggling foreign workers into the country via row boat at Chippawa. *People's Press*, December 5, 1911.

²⁵² *Welland Tribune*, September 24, 1909.

²⁵³ *Welland Tribune*, October 8, 1909, December 3, 1909.

²⁵⁴ *The Welland Telegraph*, March 1, 1910.

²⁵⁵ *Welland Tribune*, March 25, 1910.

²⁵⁶ “These shacks are not owned by the power company but by individuals living in the city.” *The Niagara Falls Daily Record*, June 24, 1910.

along ethnic lines; the Austro-Hungarians settling at Falls View and the Italians taking up residence in “Little Italy”.

By 1910, work on the jobsite was in high gear, and the familiar pattern of worker injuries and fatalities manifested itself yet again. In April, the newly constructed Niagara Falls hospital found itself overcrowded; over one quarter of the patients “having all been injured while working on the pipe line of the Ontario Power Company.”²⁵⁷ The newspaper laconically mentioned the deaths and injuries of these foreign workers, having been desensitized to the carnage experienced on the jobsites over the previous years: “While working in the trench of the new pipe line of the Ontario Power Company through Queen Victoria Park on Friday afternoon, James Ostrick, a Pole, was crushed to death. A derrick boom broke and fell upon him. There will be no inquest.”²⁵⁸

The deaths of foreign workers were rarely the subject of coroner’s inquiries, but Canadian and American deaths were more frequently investigated. In one such instance, two Canadians and one American worker who had been electrocuted on the jobsite died, and the coroner requested an inquest. The verdict of the coroner’s jury “censured” Ontario Power for not daily inspecting the electrical wiring in the pipeline, but, “The jury, however, attached blame to no one.”²⁵⁹ It would seem that coroner’s inquests merely went through the motions of an investigation in order to keep up appearances of vigilance, but the employers were never held responsible for worker deaths by the authorities.

In June of 1910, an event occurred that was to place the community of foreign workers living at Falls View under the intense scrutiny of the public and the press. The city was gearing

²⁵⁷ *The Welland Telegraph*, April 15, 1910.

²⁵⁸ *People’s Press*, April 12, 1910.

²⁵⁹ *Welland Tribune*, August 4, 1910, August 11, 1910. See also *People’s Press*, March 7, 1911.

up for a big celebration planned for June 14, the “twin cities” of Niagara Falls, Ontario and New York having planned their first international carnival. The day was touted as “the biggest day the frontier has ever seen,” with the railroads running special excursion trains for tourists to attend and witness the fireworks, parades and floats, as well as a daredevil stunt performed across the gorge by the “Great Houndin”.²⁶⁰ By all accounts the carnival was a great success, bringing a hundred thousand tourists to both cities to partake in the events, though the Great Houndin’s death-defying stunt was a flop, as he ended up stranded in the middle of the Niagara Gorge suspended on his high wire and had to be rescued.²⁶¹ After the grand fireworks display later in the evening, all in attendance found their way back to their homes, including some of the Eastern European workers who resided at Falls View.

At 2 a.m., a fire broke out in one of the shacks which housed the foreign workers at Falls View, and within minutes three of the shacks had been destroyed. Twelve men died, and eight others were badly burned, including the family that operated the boarding house- all foreigners. The press, especially *The Daily Record*, devoted much attention to the story, as a single disaster of such great magnitude had never before occurred in the area. Many theories were later discussed as to how the fire started and why so many had died. It was first supposed that the men, after attending the carnival earlier in the day, “must have been stupefied from the effects of liquor,” and when the fire broke out, they were overcome by smoke inhalation. Because of the distance from the city, the fire brigade took precious minutes to get to the scene, and by the time it got there it was too late. Blame for the deaths was quickly attributed to the poor construction of the shacks themselves; the fire spreading rapidly before the men had time to escape. The

²⁶⁰ *People’s Press*, June 7, 1910.

²⁶¹ The Great Houndin was a former house painter from Toronto. While the stunt was a failure, his dramatic rescue and an earlier suicide over the American Falls the same day kept the spectators in a state of “awestruck terror”. *The Welland Telegraph*, June 17, 1910.

staircase in one of the buildings had apparently collapsed under the weight of the fleeing men, trapping them in the burning structure. Eight bodies were later pulled from this location. This building had previously been a barn that was converted into living accommodations for nineteen, with the family (husband, wife and child) living on the ground floor while the boarders slept communally upstairs.²⁶²



Figure V- Funeral procession of the twelve dead from the fire, conducted by Morse and Son, Main St. Courtesy Niagara Falls History Museum

Due to the attention generated by this fire, we are today provided with a glimpse of what living conditions at Falls View were like for these sojourner labourers. *The Daily Record* turned the fire and the living conditions at Falls View into a *cause célèbre* of sorts, conducting a media crusade to both investigate the causes of the tragedy and to call to account those responsible. In

²⁶² *The Daily Record*, June 16, 1910; *Welland Tribune*, June 16, 1910.

what was possibly the first piece of investigative journalism ever conducted by a Niagara Falls newspaper, on June 24, 1910, *The Daily Record* fired its opening salvo:

Deserted and isolated, neglected by the authorities and the denominations alike and constantly subjected to the fatal risks of fire and disease, 250 men of foreign birth are living the lives of outcasts from civilization, just beyond the corporate limits of this city. Falls View, in the Township of Stamford, is the “home” of these unfortunate men...The township is organized; it has its Reeve and its Board of Health. It is said, however, that extreme laxity has characterized the attitude of officials toward the shack dwellers and that inspections and restrictions are unknown

The editor of the paper took an unusual amount of interest in this story, and provided a damning eye-witness report of the living conditions endured by the foreign workers at Falls View:

A thorough investigation of the shacks yesterday revealed conditions so repulsive and filthy that a description of them in a newspaper is impossible. In one house there were said to be 36 men. There were sleeping accommodations for 18. The woman in charge said that only 18 sleep at one time, as the day shift gets into the same beds the night shift vacates.

Shack life is animal, not human. The men returning from work, hang their muddy shoes on the fence and go into the shack bare-footed. The woman who does the cooking is generally bare-footed. The floor has inches of filth upon it. The men get their brandy bottles from beneath their beds before going to the table. They drink a great deal, but as it is their only recreation and amusement they are not censured for it. Their food consists of bread and a stew of meat and vegetables. Soon after eating they retire. It is significant to note that they do not undress.

In each shack there is one large sleeping room. The beds are a foot apart. As many sleep in the room as can get into the beds. Neither law, sentiment nor custom interposes any limits.²⁶³

What really bothered the editor of *The Daily Record*, however, was the lack of regulation in the area by those in authority. The shacks, it was reported, were owned by “local ‘capitalists’” who collected the rent “regardless of the conditions inside the doorstep of their possessions”, and according to the firemen the buildings were “just made to burn up.”²⁶⁴ While there were some rudimentary building code bylaws in place, the newspaper accused the officials of Stamford Township of neglecting to enforce them. The coroner was also to blame, as he declined to hold

²⁶³ *The Daily Record*, June 24, 1910. See also Carmela Patrias and Larry Savage. *Union Power: Solidarity and Struggle in Niagara* (Edmonton: AU Press, 2012), 24-26.

²⁶⁴ *The Daily Record*, June 24, 1910, June 27, 1910.

an inquest into the cause of the deaths; an inquest would have identified those culpable for the tragedy. The greatest potential danger revealed by the fire, however, was the threat of disease, and (according to *The Daily Record*) it was the responsibility of the Stamford officials to ensure that the threat of contagion was removed.²⁶⁵ A letter to the editor that was purportedly written by one of the foreign workers, publicly vilified the Stamford officials as being “criminally responsible” for the deaths due to their lack of bylaw enforcement and failure to hold an inquest, and further threatened to take the matter to officials in Ottawa.²⁶⁶ A further editorial warned the public:

The settlement at Falls View is ripe for an epidemic. Every sign points to contagion and every act invites disease. There is only one precaution that can be taken and it must be taken quickly. Let the health authorities of the Township act. Let them clean the district and then enforce cleanliness. By so doing they will protect their people from the unseen hand and justify their occupancy of public offices.²⁶⁷

The paper kept up a steady flow of invective for weeks after the fire, harping on both the threat of epidemic disease and the “somnolent officials of Stamford Township.”²⁶⁸ While *The Daily Record* praised itself in its pages, citing plaudits it received from citizens and the pulpit for the noble stand it was taking, a few readers found its attack on the Stamford officials to be unwarranted. One anonymous letter printed observed that, “The conditions at Falls View are ideal considering the class of people who live in the ‘shanties’ as you call them. These same people cannot be expected to be neat and clean considering their occupation.”²⁶⁹ Another letter penned by “A Lover of the Good” noted that while it was fine to excoriate the Stamford officials

²⁶⁵ *The Daily Record*, June 25, 1910.

²⁶⁶ A close reading of the letter within the context of all of the other stories pumped out by *The Daily Record* on the subject leads me to believe that this was a forgery perpetrated by the editor himself. Very complex and key phrases to the argument are rendered clearly in perfect English (i.e. “coroners inquest”, contractors, criminally responsible, “every ... rule and regulation to be criminally violated and broken”, & etc.) with pidgin English thrown in here and there for effect. The foreigner in question and the editor of *The Daily Record* had remarkably similar agendas, and I believe the similarity is a little too coincidental.

²⁶⁷ *The Daily Record*, June 27, 1910.

²⁶⁸ *The Daily Record*, June 28, 1910, July 8, 1910, July 9, 1910.

²⁶⁹ *The Daily Record*, July 12, 1910.

for their attitude towards conditions at Falls View, the City of Niagara Falls had its own eyesores that needed to be dealt with. While there were no comparable shacks in the city crammed with foreigners, “Lover” noted that, “we have many vile and pestilent places right in our city. For instance, on Fifth, Sixth and Seventh and Stanley Streets...Who are these foreigners that they should infringe upon the public’s health and comfort?” In the extensive tirade, “Lover” further observed:

Take any of the streets mentioned- you will see rubbish on the street in the form of cans, broken bottles and refuse that would keep you guessing to name it and the stench from filthy pig pens this hot weather is awful. That pond on Stanley Street IN THE CITY is full of miasma, dead cats and all kinds of filth. The attention of the Board of health has been drawn to this place, but no action has been taken as yet. Why these people should be allowed to continue on in this very unsanitary way, a menace to public health, is more than many can understand and the questions many people often ask.

Then again nightly and especially on Sunday a crowd of men congregate on Fifth Street with balls, bowling on the road and making Sunday a disgrace to any community, and worse too is the language that is used right where ladies and children are close by and are continually hearing it...Why should they be allowed to desecrate the Sabbath by this conduct...?²⁷⁰

Unfortunately, these accusations were never answered. The whole subject dropped out of the press after the printing of this letter on July 16, 1910 and never resurfaced. The city did, however, start charging residents in 1911 who kept pigs within city limits.²⁷¹

The only lasting reaction to the fire reported by the press was the formation of a temperance organization “in the Baptist church, Morrison Street, last Tuesday evening for the purpose of promoting temperance in the city. During the meeting, references were made to the recent fatal fire at Falls View, in which 12 foreigners lost their lives, as an example of the evils of drink.”²⁷² *The Daily Record* came out strongly against any type of prohibition, as “the real

²⁷⁰ *The Daily Record*, July 16, 1910.

²⁷¹ “Three more Italians named Dominick Boulia, John Darsagno and Nofrino Marozzo, living on 6th and 7th streets, have been served with summons by Health Inspector Webber to appear before Magistrate Fraser with regard to the pig nuisance.” *People’s Press*, August 22, 1911.

²⁷² *People’s Press*, July 12, 1910.

interests of the city would be seriously affected.” Niagara Falls had a very tumultuous relationship with the temperance/prohibition movement. While moral reformers and Protestants longed for its introduction, those involved in the tourist industry realized it would be disastrous for business as “People would be driven across the river, and much money that is now spent here by visitors would be lost.”²⁷³ Police did continue to raid boarding houses which operated as “blind pigs”, and incessantly arrested and fined drunks on the streets, but prohibition never gained the same type of traction in Niagara Falls as it did in Welland and other parts of Welland County.²⁷⁴ The whole issue would later come to a head in the winter of 1913-1914 when Welland County held a vote on the adoption of “local option”, but Niagara Falls remained firmly against its introduction. As it was, local merchants were still forced to contend with the restrictive Sabbath laws, which were considered enough of an impediment to business.²⁷⁵

By 1911, the demographic makeup of the area had changed significantly. Due to the influx of foreign workers over the preceding ten years, Niagara Falls in 1911 had acquired a more ethnically heterogeneous population than it had previously possessed. In 1911, the population of the city had grown to 9,245 from 7,853 at the time of amalgamation in 1904, representing a population increase of about 18%.²⁷⁶ Significant growth, but not terribly remarkable. What was remarkable, however, was the explosion of the Italian and Eastern European populations of the city. According to the manuscript census of 1911, the Italian

²⁷³ *People's Press*, July 19, 1910.

²⁷⁴ *Welland Tribune*, January 5, February 9, 1911. For the rancorous debate on prohibition in Welland County, see any issue of *The Welland Telegraph*, *People's Press* or *Welland Tribune* for the month of December 1913.

²⁷⁵ *Welland Tribune*, August 6, 1909. The Lord's Day Alliance was roundly hated by the merchants of Niagara Falls, as they went out of their way to instigate raids and press charges against shop owners and employees. After a series of raids in 1907, six “young ladies” were among those charged for selling goods on Sunday. The paper reported, “The prosecutions of the young lady clerks in the stores has aroused a very bitter feeling against the Alliance and its minions. The girls belong to well-known city families and are popular and respected by all who know them.” *Welland Tribune*, September 6, 1907.

²⁷⁶ *Welland Tribune*, May 19, 1905, October 19, 1911.

population of Niagara Falls numbered 604, with a further 146 living in Stamford.²⁷⁷ Eastern Europeans numbered 11 in Chippawa, 40 in Niagara Falls, and 209 living in Stamford, mostly in the Falls View area. There were also now 46 Jewish immigrants who lived in the city, most of whom came from Russia. The African Canadian population was no longer the single largest ethnic minority in the city; they were now the third. The area, then, which had been largely composed of inhabitants of British Canadian descent, was now home to close to 1100 foreigners, as well as about 150 African Canadians. The foreign workers had originally arrived as sojourner labourers to work on the hydro-electrical power development projects, but hundreds decided to stay and settled in Niagara Falls, started families, bought homes and became citizens. The new factories which opened up after 1905 were a further inducement for these former sojourner labourers to settle, offering steady work and better working conditions than construction jobs. The 1911 census reveals that no less than 550 Italians were identified as “Canadian” (under the category heading of Nationality) in both Stamford and Niagara Falls; the Italians showing a decided preference for taking citizenship and settling. The Eastern Europeans on the other hand, present a different picture, with only 48 identified as “Canadian”, mostly from the Jewish community. In Falls View, *not one* Eastern European had become naturalized, strongly suggesting that the foreign community gathered there was mostly comprised of sojourner labourers.

In 1911, the construction work on the Ontario Power expansion attracted sojourner labourers, and the 1911 census data reveal that 152 Italians and 167 Eastern Europeans were engaged in this work. One conclusion of this study is that Eastern European workers were less likely at this time to settle in the area, as opposed to the Italians. The vast majority of Eastern

²⁷⁷ See Appendix I.

Europeans in the area (with the exception of the Russian Jews) were male sojourner labourers who lived at Falls View and worked on the Ontario Power construction. A few worked on railroads and held factory jobs, but not many.²⁷⁸ Jewish men, on the other hand, were often self-employed; the greatest example from this time being Myer Salit, whose scrap iron business was to flourish and become the thriving concern that it is today.²⁷⁹

Examination of the 1911 census returns from the Italian community reveal some interesting points. While 152 men were reported as working on the Ontario Power construction site, a slightly larger number of Italian men were employed elsewhere at different types of jobs. Factories were the second largest employers of Italian men, accounting for 63 jobs, the Cyanamid singled out by the census takers as employing twenty-four. The next largest employer of Italian workers (thirty-eight) were the classifications “Labourer-Street/Public Works”, which probably encompassed both the men employed by contractors such as Rocco Cupolo in private firms engaged in street work, as well as men employed by the City of Niagara Falls. Next, sixteen men were employed as farm labourers, thirteen worked for the railroads, and the rest worked at “odd jobs” and other types of work.²⁸⁰ As noted previously (page 70), by this time children do not appear to have been employed in full time jobs, or if they were it was done so illegally. The manuscript census does however reveal teenage boys at work on the Ontario Power site. Joseph Lvert was seventeen years old, a resident of Niagara Falls who lived with his parents at 32 Seventh Street, and held a full time job (52 weeks per year, 60 hours per week) as a labourer at the “power plant.” His thirteen year old brother, Frank, was likewise employed full time at the same place as a water boy, making a nominal sum of \$200 per year. Two other fifteen

²⁷⁸ See Appendix II.

²⁷⁹ See <https://www.salitsteel.com>

²⁸⁰ See Appendix II. See Zucchi, 68-100 on “typically Italian” occupations.

year olds were employed full time as labourers, and paid the same as the men- \$700 per year. One of the fifteen year olds was a lodger in a boarding house with eight other men, and none of the others in the house shared his last name. These facts suggest the very distinct possibility that this boy was a sojourner laborer, living and working in Canada by himself, treated the same as an adult.

The 1911 census returns also listed nineteen Italians as being self-employed, mostly as fruit/grocery store owners. Philip and Anthony Lococo are recorded as operating two separate fruit stores downtown on Park Street at this time, the predecessors of the current retail/wholesale produce dealers on Victoria Avenue today. Peter Quagliariello and Rocco Cupolo were listed as owning their respective contracting businesses, and several others were listed as owning shoe maker/shoe repair shops, and one barber.²⁸¹

Examination of the newspapers between 1900 and 1911, and analysis of the census data from 1901 and 1911, reveals that the Italian immigrant community of Niagara Falls very rapidly took root, grew, and became the distinctive enclave of residents dubbed “Little Italy” by the press. In the process, they also became the largest ethnic minority group in the area of non-British descent, accounting for 750 residents. The question is, why? Undoubtedly, the pre-existence of the small Italian community before 1901 served as a nucleus around which Italian sojourner labourers gravitated, and possibly, to a lesser extent, the close proximity of the larger established Italian community of Niagara Falls, New York.²⁸² The Italian immigrants who had

²⁸¹ There are some discrepancies between the 1911 City Directory and the 1911 manuscript census regarding business ownership. According to the City Directory, Sebastian Quagliariello operated the contracting business, and James Lococo operated the produce store at 31 Park St.

²⁸² While many of the original construction workers were brought over to the Canadian jobsites by A.C. Douglass from the U.S., I only count eighteen Italian residents in the 1911 census as having been born in the United States. By 1911, many described in the census as Italian were either born in Italy or had been born during the previous ten years in Canada.

settled in the area before 1901 provided a point of entry into the community for later Italian sojourner labourers, having reached an accommodation with the British Canadian residents in much the same way as the earlier African Canadian community. Italian immigrants who settled in Niagara Falls obviously thought that life in Canada offered more opportunities or was considered preferable compared to life in Italy, or even the United States. Eastern Europeans, on the other hand, had no established presence in the area (other than in Niagara Falls N.Y.), and therefore took longer to settle in the city.

CONCLUSION

While the foreign immigrants who lived and worked in Niagara Falls experienced discrimination and racism from the British Canadian residents, from what I have been able to discover from a close study of the *Welland Tribune* and *People's Press*, I argue that the animosity manifested towards them was not all that consistent nor intense.²⁸³ A similar study conducted of Welland between 1900 and 1920 using *The Welland Telegraph* as a source yielded a high level of resentment and hostility directed towards the foreign labourers who started to arrive in town after 1905.²⁸⁴ The pen of the editor of the *Telegraph* fairly dripped with venom when he published editorials on "The Unspeakable Foreigner" and their presence in the town.²⁸⁵ When Chinese workers were imported to work in Welland's factories during World War One, the town council and manufacturers faced intense resistance and condemnation from outraged British Canadian residents.²⁸⁶ While Welland and Niagara Falls were similar in that they both were comprised of mostly British Canadian inhabitants, and experienced a large influx of foreign immigration at the beginning of the twentieth century, they were also different in certain respects that may help to explain the contrasting reactions to the foreigners. Welland was a small town, and in comparison to Niagara Falls, the number of foreigners who migrated there represented a larger percentage of the population, especially in Crowland. Also, the population increase was

²⁸³ Instances of aggressive racism and discrimination against foreigners are few in the pages of the newspaper and confined to the early days, with the press blaming the instigators. In 1903, a pair of intoxicated young men tried to "play roughly" with some Italians on Main St., but were soon discouraged when "one of the Italians drew a gun." In February 1904, police investigated a stabbing at the Centre: "It is said that two white men were tormenting an Italian, who finally drew a knife and stabbed one of them." In December 1904, "A couple of drunken Italians were tormented on the streets on Tuesday by a lot of school boys and trouble seemed imminent for a time. The boys were more to blame than the Dagos. If people would keep closer watch on their children's behavior and make less complaint about the police department it would be better for all concerned." *Welland Tribune*, February 27, 1903, February 5, 1904, December 16, 1904.

²⁸⁴ See Roger Fast, *Welland and Its Immigrant Community*, 35-38.

²⁸⁵ *The Welland Telegraph*, April 3, 1908.

²⁸⁶ *The Welland Telegraph*, November 23, 27, December 11, 1917, *Welland Tribune*, November 22, 29, 1917, *People's Press*, November 27, December 4, 1917.

much more rapid in Welland, with the town almost tripling its numbers between 1905 and 1911. Welland was also much more insular than Niagara Falls. Being close to the American border and also a tourist destination, the inhabitants of Niagara Falls were accustomed to large groups of strangers passing through town on a regular basis. Most significantly, I argue, Niagara Falls already possessed a sizable racialized community within its midst since at least the 1850s- the African American/African Canadian community. Also, Niagara Falls was actually excited over the prospect of industrial development in the area, probably because the inhabitants jealously regarded the explosive growth of the neighbouring city across the river. In Welland, there was more vocal resentment towards industrialization and the inevitable evils which accompanied it.

In February of 1906, a news item appeared in the paper that had never been published up to that point. The newspapers of the time devoted a fair bit of space to social items which appear extremely trivial to the modern reader: people's vacation plans, the grades of the students attending the local high school, descriptions of parties, reports of illness, and of course birth, death and wedding notices. The *Peoples Press* of February 6, 1906 was remarkable because, for the first time, it provided a fairly lengthy account of a wedding amongst the foreigners:

There was a big celebration in Little Italy on Thursday over the wedding of Caroline, daughter of Frank Bell, the well-known contractor, to Guiseppi Venzance, the Ferry Street jeweler. The ceremony was performed at ten o'clock in the morning at the church of Our Lady of Peace at Falls View by Rev. Father Best. The bride was attired in white satin trimmed with lace and wore a veil with orange blossoms and carried white carnations. After the ceremony the party was conveyed to the home of the bride's parents on Stanley Street in fifteen carriages, and the festivities were continued in lavish style till night. Mr. and Mrs. Venzance left in the evening for New York. They will live at the corner of Stanley and Ferry Streets.²⁸⁷

This news item is more than a simple account of a wedding, for it signified that the parties involved had gained a modicum of acceptance by Niagara Falls' fashionable society. Apart from spectacular death on the job or appearance in the police court, foreigners were excluded from the

²⁸⁷ *Peoples Press*, February 6, 1906.

pages of the newspaper- especially the “society” pages. Even long-time residents and prominent citizens of the African Canadian community only made the pages of the paper in death, never in marriage. Rocco Cupolo and his daughter had apparently “made it”, and were now considered respected members of the community.

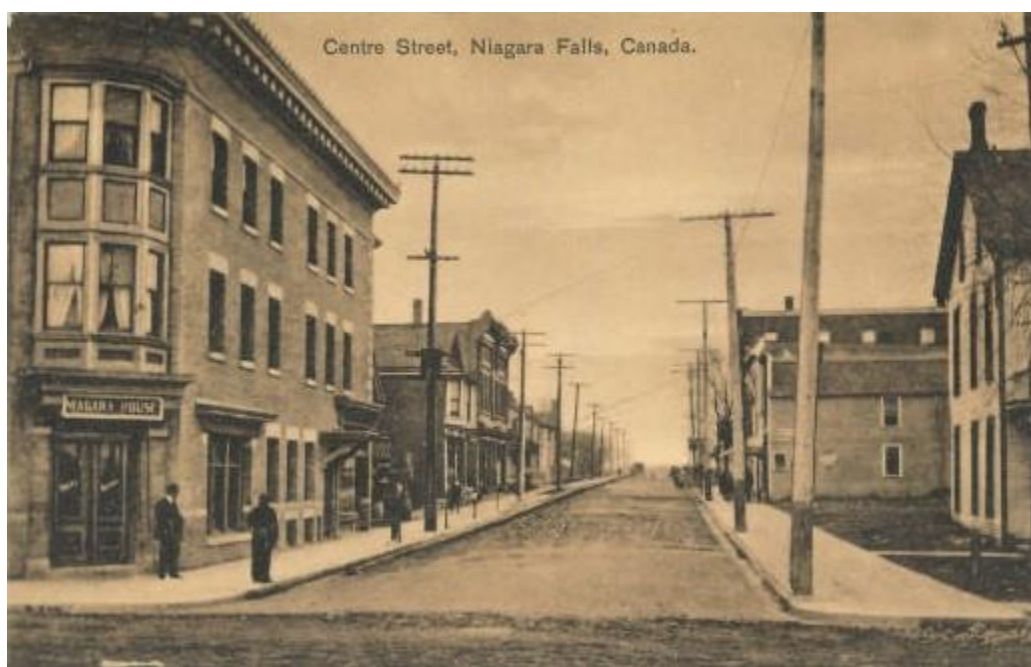


Figure VI- Centre St., the gateway to “Little Italy” circa 1910, showing storefronts, cement sidewalks, curbs, electrical and telephone services, and a generally neat and clean appearance. Courtesy Niagara Falls History Museum.

In Niagara Falls, the foreign immigrants who took up the trappings of Canadian society were generally accepted by it. If immigrants sent their children to school, took the oath of citizenship, held down a job and did not cause trouble (in other words, if they chose to assimilate), they were looked upon with approval by British Canadians.²⁸⁸ Victorian society was all about improvement, and foreigners who chose to assimilate were thought to be improving themselves, by conforming to British societal standards of the day. In 1907, the newspaper noted

²⁸⁸ Woodsworth says as much in his book, especially regarding Italian immigrants. “The Italian is gay, light-hearted, and, if his fur is not stroked the wrong way, inoffensive as a child.” Although condescendingly racist, Woodsworth was optimistic regarding the Italians and their assimilation into Canadian society. *Strangers Within our Gates*, 134.

approvingly, “Little Italy is looking for further improvements. A permanent walk is wanted on 6th Street from Lincoln to Welland. Walks, sewers and electric lights will go a long ways towards keeping the Italian quarter from becoming a dangerous slum.”²⁸⁹

British Canadian residents were pleased to see foreigners and African Canadians like Rocco Cupolo and Burr Plato who made the effort to “improve” themselves by conforming to the middle-class Victorian social standards of the day. Burr Plato deserved high praise in his funeral eulogy for the many worthy things he achieved in his life through hard work and determination. For the white residents, Burr Plato represented the possibilities which were potentially open to all immigrants who chose to take up residence in the salubrious British Canadian environment of Niagara Falls. Long-time Italian residents of the city, like the Cupolos and Quagliariellos likewise exemplified to the British Canadian residents that immigrants from different ethnic backgrounds could successfully incorporate themselves into the resident population. While discrimination and racism did exist, it was paternalistic in nature, not hateful. The British Canadian residents of Niagara Falls appear to have had no major problems accepting the foreign immigrants who arrived in the city after 1901, due to the presence of the small African Canadian and Italian immigrant populations who lived in the area for many years previously.

In 1908, what was left of the building formerly referred to as the “Beehive” at the corner of Ferry Street and Stanley Avenue, caught fire, and killed 23 year old Felix Critelli. After removing his automobile from the scene, Felix rushed back into the burning building to save some boarders who were asleep. There was an explosion, and Felix was killed, but the men escaped. The newspaper praised Felix’s heroic actions, and commented, “The sympathy of a

²⁸⁹ *Welland Tribune*, February 15, 1907.

wide circle of friends goes out to the bereaved parents, brothers and sisters of Felix Critelli. He was a remarkably bright and intelligent young man of twenty-three years, and was well liked by all who knew him.”²⁹⁰ While the foreign sojourner laborers may have been considered of a little lower “class” than their Canadian or American brethren, the foreigners who became and acted like citizens (in Niagara Falls at least), were accorded the same respect in the press as other Canadian residents of the city.

²⁹⁰ *Welland Tribune*, October 18, 1908.

APPENDIX I- POPULATION

Population figures are difficult to reconcile between the “official” results tabulated and published by the government, and those reported in the manuscript census forms (see page 6). Provided are the “official” figures reported by the Government of Canada in these tables regarding total population, as well as the “British” statistics for comparison purposes only. African-Canadian, Italian, Eastern-European and other statistics of ethnicity reported in these tables and throughout the body of this paper are those compiled through analysis of the manuscript census forms. As this study focuses on Victorian ideas of race and recent historiographical concepts of “racialization”, the large percentage of ethnic Germans and their descendants who settled the area throughout the preceding century are omitted (see page 14).

Welland County- 1891: Places of Birth of the People*

| | Population | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|------------|------------|
| Welland County | 25132 | |
| Canadian Born | 19935 | 79.32% |
| British and British Territories | 1544 | 6.14% |
| United States | 1435 | 5.7% |
| Ireland | 979 | 3.9% |
| Germany | 637 | 2.53% |
| Scotland | 481 | 1.9% |
| Other [§] | 121 | 0.48% |

Total Population

| | 1891 | 1901 | 1911 |
|-----------------------|------|------|------|
| Niagara Falls Town | 3349 | 4244 | - |
| Niagara Falls Village | 1179 | 1458 | - |
| City of Niagara Falls | - | - | 9248 |
| Stamford Township | 2099 | 2140 | 3139 |

* Source- *Census of Canada 1890-91*. Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1893.

[§] Includes Scandinavia, France, Italy (54), Spain and Portugal, At Sea, “Other Countries”, and Unknown.

Ethnic Groups 1901

| | Niagara Falls Town | Niagara Falls Village | Stamford Township |
|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| “British”* | 3903 | 1118 | 1748 |
| “Black” | 12 | 132 | 12 |
| Italian | 40 | 31 | 44 |
| Other ^{\$} | 34 | 7 | 11 |

Ethnic Groups 1911

| | City of Niagara Falls | Stamford Township |
|------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| “British” | 7128 | 2342 |
| Italian | 604 | 146 |
| Eastern European | 40 | 209 |
| African/Negro | 141 | 7 |
| Jews | 46 | 0 |
| Chinese | 21 | 0 |
| Other** | 14 | 2 |

It must be remembered that Stamford Township was quite large, and mostly populated by British Canadians. The foreign population of the township, however, was concentrated in areas close to the City limits, such as at Falls View or the outskirts of “Little Italy”.

The category “Eastern European” was used out of desperation to make sense of the manuscript census entries. Individual census takers utilized a plethora of national/ethnic designations as well as racial epithets to identify the people from Austria-Hungary, Russia, the eastern portions of Prussia/Germany and ethnic Poles residing in the Niagara Falls area. The officials in Ottawa were undoubtedly faced with a huge dilemma trying to decipher this information, and likewise attempt to synthesize coherent statistics for publication, as evidenced by the numerous attempts to correct the manuscript census pages. The most expedient solution found for the purpose of this study was to place all of these individuals under the category of “Eastern European”, encompassing Austro-Hungarians^{\$\$} German Poles and Russian Poles, excepting those differentiated under the category of Religion by identification of “Jew”, “Jewish” or “Hebrew”. As for the 1901 census, the official results tabulated by district and sub-district in the printed census volumes are difficult to reconcile with the manuscript returns.

Ethnicities follow those listed under the heading “Racial or Tribal Origin” in the 1911 census. Children were labelled with the same racial appellation as the father (not the mother), regardless of where they were born. Hence, the Canadian-born child of an Italian father and an Irish mother would be considered “Italian”.

*British figures taken from *Census of Canada, 1901* Table XI. Origins of the People, page 346.

^{\$}Includes Swedish, French, French Canadians, Swiss, Dutch, Austrian, Bohemian, Aboriginal, Chinese and Danish.

**Includes Armenian, Syrian, Russian, Bulgarian, Assyrian; Excludes Northern Europeans and French Canadians.

^{\$\$} Austrians, Hungarians, Croatians, Carnolians, Tyrolians, Sclavonians, “Polack” and etc.

APPENDIX II- EMPLOYMENT

Sources- 1891, 1901 and 1911 Manuscript Censes. Includes Residents of Niagara Falls City/Town/Village, Stamford Township and Chippawa

1891- African Canadians*

| | | |
|------------------------|----|-----------------|
| General Laborers | 11 | All Male |
| Waiter/Hotel Waiter | 9 | All Male |
| Farmer/Farm Laborer | 5 | All Male |
| Laundress/Washer Woman | 5 | All Female |
| Hotel Cook | 5 | 3 Male 2 Female |
| House Keeper/Domestic | 4 | All Female |
| Hackman/Driver | 4 | All Male |
| Clergyman/Sexton | 2 | All Male |
| Dining Car Waiter | 2 | All Male |
| Barber | 1 | Male |

*Figures are based upon incomplete reconstruction of those identified as Black in 1901 census. See Pages17-18.

1891-Italians

| | | |
|-----------------|----|----------|
| General Laborer | 24 | All Male |
| Navvy | 1 | All Male |
| Storekeeper | 1 | All Male |
| Railroad Worker | 1 | All Male |
| Huckster | 1 | All Male |

1901-Italians

| | | |
|----------------------|----|----------|
| Farm Laborer | 14 | All Male |
| Laborer | 9 | All Male |
| Fruit Seller | 7 | All Male |
| Contractor | 2 | All Male |
| Merchant/Storekeeper | 1 | All Male |
| Unknown | 2 | All Male |

1901- African Canadians

| | | |
|----------------------------------|----|------------------|
| Cook/Hotel Cook | 12 | 8 Male 4 Female* |
| Laundress | 11 | All Female |
| Unknown/Illegible/Indecipherable | 8 | 7 Male 1 Female |
| Domestic/House Keeper | 8 | All Female |
| Farm Laborer | 7 | All Male |
| General Laborer | 5 | All Male |
| Waiter/Hotel Waiter | 5 | All Male |
| Mason- Laborer | 4 | All Male |
| Gardener | 4 | All Male |
| Hack Driver | 3 | All Male |
| Bell Boy | 3 | All Male |
| Char Woman | 3 | All Female |
| Machinist | 2 | All Male |
| Railroad Waiter | 2 | All Male |
| Railroad Worker | 2 | All Male |
| Nurse | 1 | Female |
| Music Teacher | 1 | Female |
| Minister | 1 | Male |
| Dressmaker | 1 | Female |
| Waitress | 1 | Female |
| Plasterer | 1 | Male |
| Teamster | 1 | Male |

*The census claims that six year old Mary Henderson was employed as a full-time cook which must be a mistake.

1911- Jewish Immigrants

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|----------|
| Peddler | 3 | All Male |
| Hatter | 2 | All Male |
| Chiropractor | 1 | Male |
| Store Keeper | 1 | Male |
| Second-Hand Store | 1 | Male |
| Merchant | 1 | Male |
| Junk Dealer | 1 | Male |
| Driver | 1 | Male |
| Odd Jobs | 1 | Male |
| Bank Clerk | 1 | Male |
| Tailor | 1 | Male |
| Sewing- Shirt Factory | 1 | Female |

1911- African Canadians

| | | |
|--------------------------|----|-----------------|
| Laborer/Teamster-Streets | 12 | All Male |
| Laundress | 9 | All Female |
| Cook | 6 | 5 Male 1 Female |
| Laborer- Factory | 5 | 4 Male 1 Female |
| Farm Laborer | 4 | All Male |
| Laborers- Miscellaneous | 4 | All Male |
| Laborer- Power Plant | 3 | All Male |
| Laborer- Odd Jobs | 3 | All Male |
| Miner | 2 | All Male |
| Domestic | 2 | All Female |
| Porter- Railway | 2 | All Male |
| Cab Man | 2 | All Male |
| Bell Boy | 2 | All Male |
| Store Keeper | 1 | Female |
| Store Employee | 1 | Female |
| Musician | 1 | Male |
| Teamster- Odd Jobs | 1 | Male |
| Hotel Employee | 1 | Male |
| Steward- Niagara Club | 1 | Male |
| Waiter- Dining Car | 1 | Male |
| Railroad Employee | 1 | Male |
| Mail Carrier | 1 | Male |
| Paper Hanger | 1 | Male |
| Mason | 1 | Male |
| Farmhand | 1 | Male |

1911- Eastern Europeans

| | | |
|--------------------------------|-----|------------|
| Laborer-Power Plant/Ont. Power | 167 | All Male |
| Laborer- Railroad | 11 | All Male |
| Laborer- Factory | 9 | All Male |
| Domestic- Hotel | 8 | All Female |
| Laborer- Sand Pit | 2 | All Male |
| Laborer- Odd Jobs | 2 | All Male |
| Laborer- Pipeline | 2 | All Male |
| Railroad- Coal Shoveller | 1 | Male |
| Laborer- Streets | 1 | Male |

1911- Italians

All Italians employed are male, excepting two women employed as domestics- See page 71.

| | Residents | Lodgers | Total |
|------------------------------|-----------|---------|-------|
| Laborer- Power Co. | 46 | 106 | 152 |
| Laborer- Cyanamid | 3 | 21 | 24 |
| Laborer- Factory | 18 | 21 | 39 |
| Laborer- Street/Public Works | 18 | 20 | 38 |
| Laborer- Farm | 5 | 11 | 16 |
| Laborer- Railroad | 2 | 10 | 12 |
| Laborer- Odd Jobs | 2 | 7 | 11 |
| Laborer- Stone Quarry | 5 | 3 | 8 |
| Shoemaker | 5 | 1 | 6 |
| Grocer- Store | 5 | 0 | 5 |
| Fruit Dealer/Store | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Salesman | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| Laborer- Victoria Park | 3 | 0 | 3 |
| Priest | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Contractor | 2 | 0 | 2 |
| Store Keeper | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Barber | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Gardener | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Teamster | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Mailman | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Self-Employed Brewery* | 1 | 0 | 1 |

*Very strangely, Andrew Fisker of 79 Seventh St. was listed as being a self-employed "Liquor Mfg at home", and the job code of 7-0-26 translates as "Self-Employed Brewery & Malthouse".

1911- Chinese- All Male

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Laundryman- Owner | 5 |
| Laundryman- Employee | 3 |
| Cook- Hotel | 2 |
| Hotel Employee | 1 |

APPENDIX III- GEOGRAPHY

Not surprisingly, the geography of the City of Niagara Falls has changed considerably since 1904. Of particular relevance to the present study, are the changes that have occurred in and around the area formerly dubbed “Little Italy.”

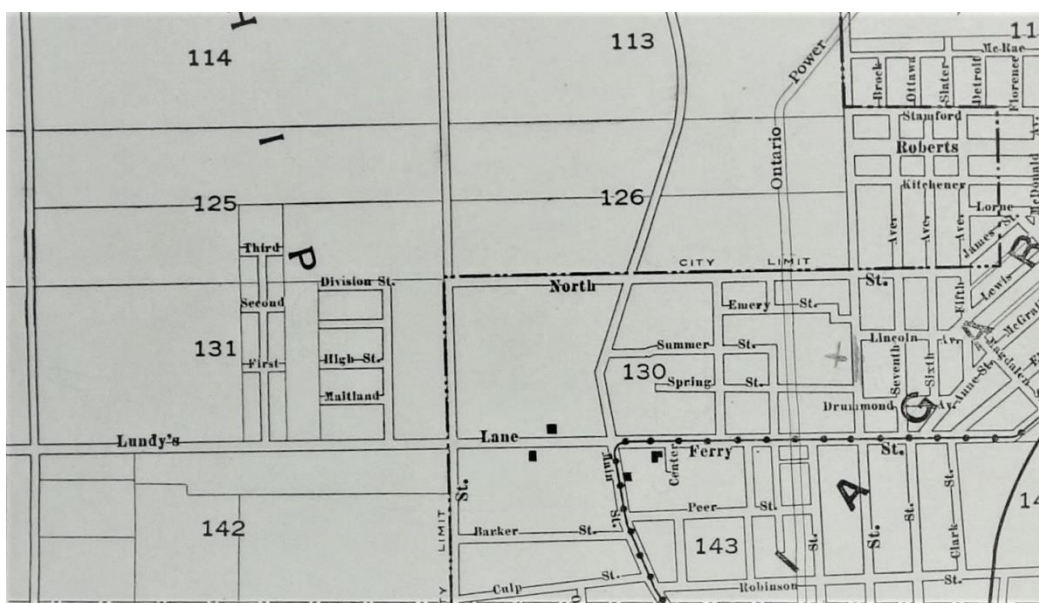


Street Name Changes:

| | | |
|---------------|------------------|---------------|
| Fifth Ave. | to | Slater Ave |
| Sixth Ave. | to | Desson Ave. |
| Seventh Ave. | to | Buchanan Ave. |
| Drummond Ave. | to | Spring St. |
| Lincoln Ave. | to | Forsythe St. |
| James St. | no longer exists | |

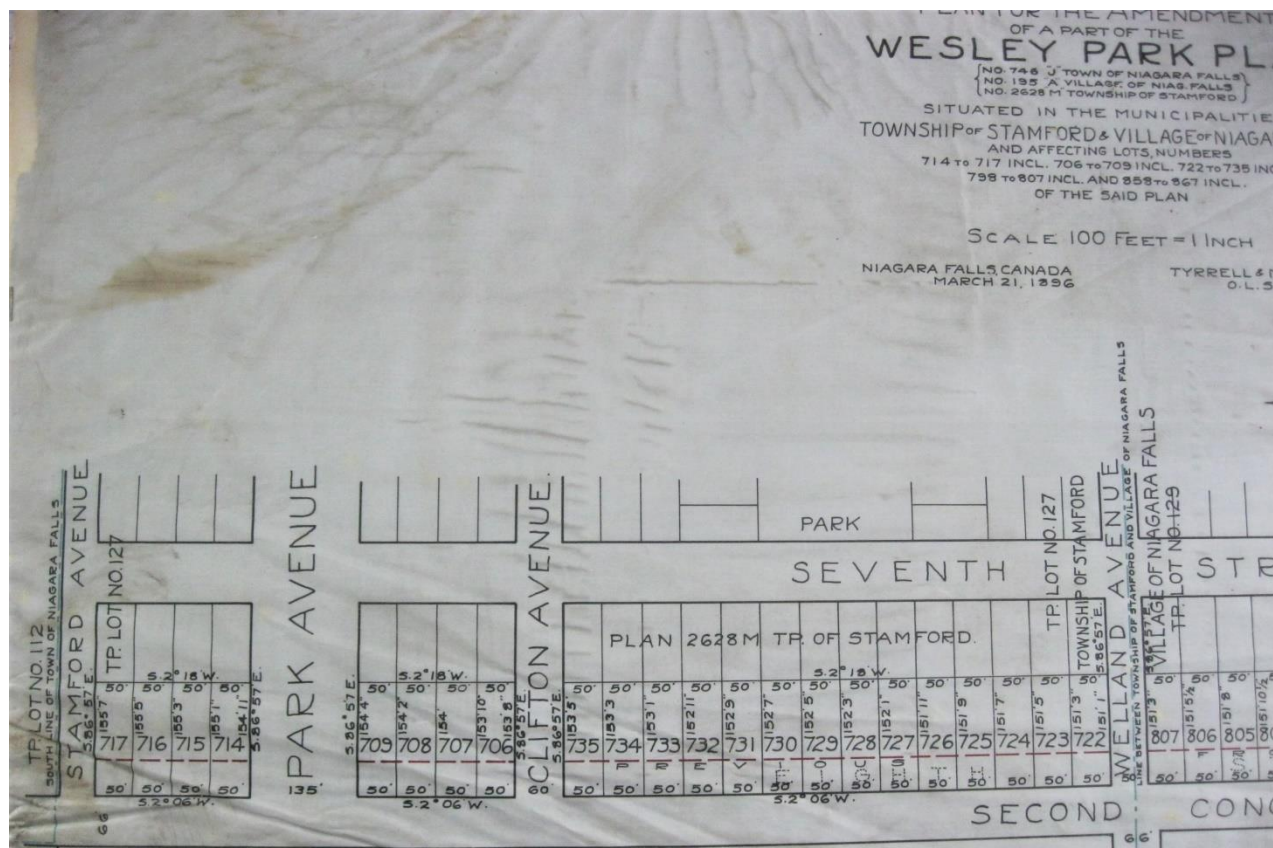
For some inexplicable reason, as indicated by the yellow line, Stamford Township jutted into the borders of the City of Niagara Falls, cutting Stanley Ave. off at North St. The area within the yellow box was all in Stamford Township, which created no small problem when

attempting to determine where residents lived. In Stamford Township, the census takers in 1911 did not write down the street addresses where people lived (the exception being the Falls View area). This appears to have worked well enough on the outskirts of the township (for instance- Lots 18 and 24 in the area of the sandpits at Mountain Rd. and Portage Rd.), but when they arrived at the area of “Little Italy” defined by the yellow square on the map, I discovered a mystery which was to cause me one whole year of grief and consternation in processing the information for my analysis. Two years ago, I accepted the census placement of about 150 Italian immigrants within the boundaries of “Lot 131” in Stamford as fact, until I thought about it in light of subsequent research. It made no sense, and it flew in the face of what I had later found documented in the newspapers, that most all of the Italian immigrants had congregated in “Little Italy”. I *knew* Rocco Cupolo, Sebastian Quagliariello, and Michael Colangelo lived on Stanley Avenue from the newspapers, not above Drummond Hill on Lundy’s Lane; I just had to prove it.



Lot 131 in relation to “Little Italy”

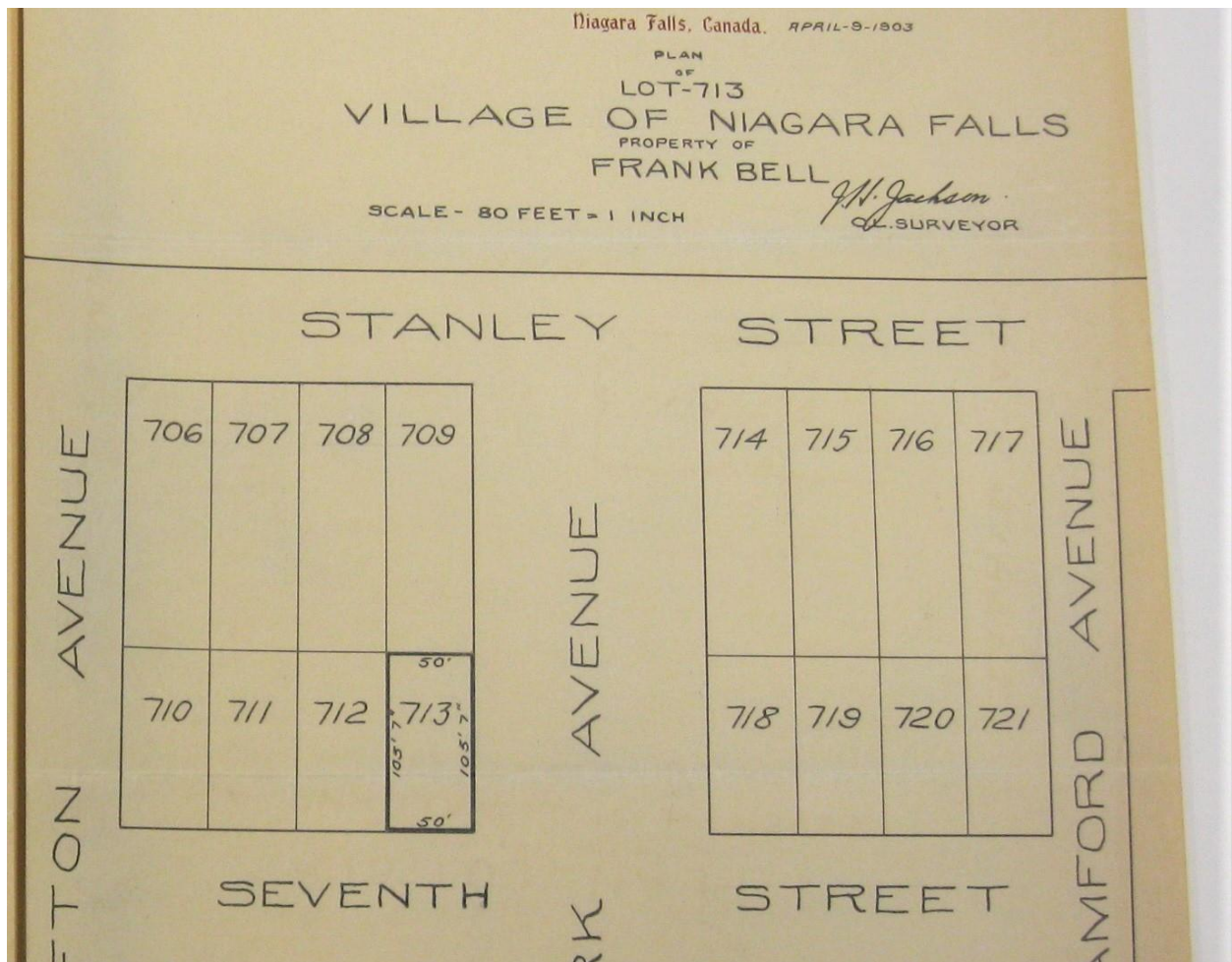
In the April 8, 1904 *Welland Tribune*, a news item appeared regarding a liquor and beer seizure by the police when they “dropped down on ‘Little Italy’”. At the house of Michael Colangelo on Stanley Avenue, about a quarter of a mile from Ferry Street...” This placed the location of both “Little Italy” and the Colangelo residence on Stanley Ave. ¼ mile from Ferry St.; right where Stamford Township intruded into the city. The 1901 census located Michael Colangelo’s house at “WCP 722”. This further complicates matters. As shown in the map previous, “Lots” (such as Lot 131) are very large, and date back to the original survey of Stamford Township in the late 1700s. Over time, the lots were of course subdivided, and one such subdivision took place in the Town of Niagara Falls in the 1880s known as Wesley Park. Seibel informs us the Wesley Park survey covered over 200 acres and provided for 914 building lots “as far west as Stanley Street and Stamford Street.”* “WCP 722” indicates that Michael Coleangelo lived at lot 722 of the Wesley Park survey. The map below shows that lot 722 was just outside the town/village/city limits in Stamford Township, at the corner of Stanley and present day North St. (Map Courtesy of Niagara Falls History Museum)



* Seibel, *Niagara Falls, Canada: A History*, 43.

In the January 30, 1900 *People's Press*, Sebastian "Quaghareillo" was identified as living on Stanley Street, and the 1901 census located him at WCP725. The *Stamford 1891 Voters' List* further placed him at "Lot 726 Wesley Park". The previous map again locates both on Stanley (Second Concession) in Stamford.

From the story of Rocco Cupolo's daughter's wedding (*People's Press*, February 6, 1906) we know the Cupolos also lived on Stanley Street. A series of maps in the archives of the Niagara Falls History Museum inform us that Frank Bell/Rocco Cupolo either owned quite a bit of property or developed property in the area (probably both).



The *Stamford Voters' List* of 1910 places the residence of Rocco Cupolo at W.P.P. 720, 721, which we see from the map is just off of Stanley Ave. at the corner of Stamford and Seventh on the outskirts of "Little Italy" in Stamford. The 1911 City Directory further places the business of Frank Bell the contractor at "Stanley cor Roberts", which is in the centre of the previous map at Stanley and "Park Avenue". From the above examples (and there are others), we find that these three men did indeed live on or close to Stanley Ave. on the outer boundary of "Little Italy" within the boundaries of Lot 127. Why then does the 1911 census place these three people and close to 150 others at Lot 131 about a mile away? In desperation, I went back to the manuscript census to see if I had made a mistake. It turns out I did not, but someone else had.

| | | à la ville. Ou autres détails.) | | | |
|---|----------------|------------------------------------|--|---|----------|
| 3 | | 4 | | 5 | 6 |
| " | Herbert | Lot 131 | | M | son |
| | Charles | " | | M | son |
| | Bastable Henry | " | | M | lodge |
| | Carole Gorman | Lot 131 | | M | Head |
| | Spot Theres | " | | M | Wife |
| | Spiotha Salato | " | | M | Brother |
| " | Maggie | " | | M | Wife |
| " | Edward | " | | M | son |
| " | Uele | " | | M | Daughter |

Above is a sample of the manuscript page in question. Notice where "Lot 131" is written, and the smudge marks behind the writing. I finally had an answer to the mystery: Some official had taken it upon himself to "correct" all of these entries, changing the original entries of the

census taker for the 150 residents of this area of Stamford just outside of “Little Italy” to read “Lot 131”. This is a perfect example of how the census information should not be taken at face value. Only by thorough and detailed analysis can the census data be used to offer meaningful information about the past. The census officials in Ottawa must have been often frustrated by the records which were submitted by the various census districts, judging by the number of corrections on the documents. The above example also proves, however, that either the local official in charge or the census taker himself also made corrections (See Appendix IV).

While this study has proven that “Little Italy” was far removed from, and next to no foreigners lived within the preserves of Lot 131, it appears to be a little known fact that one very famous industrialist did for a time own property and live on Lot 131. E.G. Acheson, inventor and owner of both the Carborundum and Acheson Graphite, operated factories of the same names on both sides of the river, and he also owned a residence on Lundy’s Lane at Lot 131 according to the 1911 census. The *People’s Press* August 21, 1900 noted, “President Acheson of the carborundum works at Niagara Falls N.Y., who recently purchased the Woodruff property in Lundy’s Lane from Alem Green, intends to make extensive repairs and alterations before taking up his residence there.” It begs the question as to why a wealthy American industrialist would own a place on the outskirts of the Village of Niagara Falls on Lundy’s Lane? Here is another interesting story to be told.

Appendix IV- Example of Mistakes in the Manuscript Census Forms

| | | | | | |
|------|-------|---------|--------------|-------------|----------|
| 1908 | paper | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | Labourer |
| 1906 | paper | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | Labourer |
| 1890 | 1896 | Italian | Commonwealth | R. Catholic | none |
| 1909 | paper | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | Labourer |
| 1911 | | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | none |
| 1911 | | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | none |
| 1911 | | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | none |
| 1911 | | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | none |
| 1910 | paper | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | Labourer |
| 1911 | paper | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | Labourer |
| 1911 | paper | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | Labourer |
| 1911 | | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | none |
| 1911 | | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | none |
| 1911 | | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | none |
| 1911 | | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | none |
| 1911 | | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | none |
| 1911 | | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | none |
| 1911 | | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | none |
| 1905 | paper | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | Labourer |
| 1905 | | Greece | Nation | R. Catholic | none |
| 1905 | paper | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | Labourer |
| 1907 | | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | none |
| 1907 | | Italian | Nation | R. Catholic | none |

The above page is from the 1911 census, and shows a portion of page 10, District 29 Stamford Township, Welland County. This is one example where the “Nationality” category had to be corrected for almost a full page, apparently due to the fact that it was pre-filled as “Canadian” and had to be changed to “Italian”. The entries for Austro-Hungarians living at Falls View for 1911 are riddled with such errors, especially in the “Nationality” and “Language Commonly Spoken” categories. Other mistakes include the mislabeling of census forms with the wrong district numbers. Different hands can be discerned at work on individual pages, suggesting that the “corrector” was often not the same person who initially filled out the census form.

APPENDIX V- The Patronizing Press, Entertainment, and Morality

The following story appeared in the *Welland Tribune* September 18, 1903. The reporter took an unremarkable police court complaint made by a female foreigner, turned it into a public spectacle of biblical proportions, and condescendingly poked fun at the complainant's expense.

A CHAPTER.

And behold it came to pass in the reign of the third cadi, that a woman of Ethiopia came unto him and said:

O Cadi, live forever. My name is Mary Jane Bell and I am exceeding wroth. For a woman of Italy hath smitten my son, my own child.

Then came one James and said:

I am the son of the woman of Ethiopia. The woman of Italy did smite me hip and thigh with a boulder of exceeding great size and behold, I fell. And as I rose up, I did pluck the Apple of Discord and did cast it at the woman and smote her on the head. Then swift were my feet as the light on the hills at sunrise and behold the woman of Italy did run after me.

Then came another and said:

Behold, I am Mary Judge. The apples of discord did grow in my garden and I did bid the son of the woman of Ethiopia to gather them.

And when the man of law called Griffiths did call out to the woman and question her, she lifted up her voice and cried:

Don't you get gay with me, because I won't stand it. Behold the husband of my sister is deputy sheriff of the court of Scranton and if you were in Pennsylvania you wouldn't dare to talk like that.

Then the captain of the Cadi's guard rose up and commanded all to be silent and did circulate the pitcher filled with water of Niagara.

Then came a maiden and cried:

Behold, I am Minnie Fidela Bell, but I did not see the strife.

And he from the town that lieth in the centre of the county bade her go to.

Then came a man in garments of white and said:

Behold the woman of Italy is called Mary Pease. I did see her cast boulders at the son of the woman of Ethiopia and at the son of Mary Judge. She is indeed a peach to throw stones. She can beat me.

Then up rose the Cadi and cried in a loud voice:

Behold, I find the woman of Italy did cast stones at the son of the woman of Ethiopia, but I find that her provocation was great. And I bid ye all to get hence and keep the peace and cease to trouble the soldiers of my guard. Selah.

The following appeared in the *Welland Tribune* June 26, 1908, and highlights some of the potential complications which could arise from taking in boarders:

The Falls View Assault Case.

A Tootsey-Wootsey Story- Klandon Acquitted.

Mrs Angela Galias, on her own admission, used to receive attentions from Peter Kladon. Now Mrs. Galias is a married woman and her husband is a strapping big chap with a long and furious pair of mustachios, and it is a safe bet that Angela and Peter did not do any tootsey-wootsey business when he was within gunshot.

The two live at Falls View, Stamford Township.

It so happened that on Wednesday June 10th last, the well of admiration bubbled so high for the lady with the cherubic name, that he embraced her, for be it known, hubby Galias was over in Buffalo at that time.

It was suggested by the ardent Peter that inside was a better place for love-making than out on the doorstep, where prying eyes might see, and gabbing lips might tell the tale of osculations.

However, so Peter says, the lady with the sweet name was fearful lest someone would invade the domain at an inappropriate time.

Peter pressed his case, but it was without avail.

Then, becoming exceptionally ardent, he took her by the waist from behind and carried her, for love is very strong.

Footsteps were heard.

It was not the husband, but Mr. M. Senior, who lives with Mr. and Mrs. Galias, as also did Peter.

Peter at once went to his room and to Senior Mrs. Galias told her story and a warrant was sworn out for the ardent young man's arrest, charging him with assault.

The case was heard before Judge Wells at Welland on Wednesday afternoon.

Mrs. Galias told her story. Her husband sat in hearing, but she confessed that Peter had often kissed and hugged her.

They are Austrians, and Louis Herrick, who was the court interpreter, was used by Mrs. Galias to show how her captor had taken her and carried her to her boudoir.

She admitted that he had often patted her cheeks, besides numerous kissings.

The ardent young man told his story. He said that she was quite responsive, and tickled and pinched and bumped against him very, very often.

He admitted trying to steal the lady away and taking her to her boudoir much after the fashion of the theft in that well known play "Sappho," but he had been disturbed by the footfall mentioned.

As the defendant had a good character, and Mrs. Gallias on her own admission had often been fondled, Peter was at once dismissed.

In summing up the case, Judge Wells said that a woman had it in her power to repel first advances and not leave room for any later developments. This had not been done by Mrs. Galias.

Wives who did not care much for their husbands sometimes eloped with boarders. Note how readily the local police stepped in to help recover the American offenders. *People's Press*, August 17, 1909.

Guido Leardi, an Italian from Petten township, P.A., arrived here in search of his wife, six year old son and ten months' old daughter. The woman had deserted her husband and skipped out with an attractive boarder, named Pietro Augatti. The recreant wife, who is pretty and only 24 years old, and Pietro were locked up here pending the arrival of an officer to take them back to Pennsylvania.

The following appeared in the *Welland Tribune* May 10, 1907. Stories such as these were not only intended to be entertaining and humorous, but they also offered the English Canadian readers a sense of moral superiority over their less civilized foreign brethren:

The morals of the foreign elements of the population are a source of much trouble to the police. One night last week, a certain Frenchman went home and found an old lover of his wife, whom he had warned to keep away from his place, again wooing her. The interloper fled, but the Frenchman chased him down the street, caught him, knocked him down, hammered his face black, bit off part of an ear, and kicked him sore all over. The victim crawled to the police office and secured the Frenchman's arrest, but when the case was called in police court did not appear against him so he went free. On Monday afternoon there was a riot in Seventh Street. A middle-aged Italian went home and found a young man in the company of his young wife. The visitor jumped through a window and the enraged husband went after him. He called his friends to join in the chase and it looked like a lynching, but the fugitive succeeded in hiding till the police came and took him to the cells for safety. Next day, all the parties held a confab and the husband concluded that the disparity of ages between himself and his wife was the cause of the trouble, so he turned her over to her young admirer, saying he was glad to get rid of her, and agreed to become a boarder in the house of the newly arranged couple.

People's Press, September 8, 1903:

There were some funny scenes around police headquarters last week.

On Friday morning Mary Smith, a husky Polack woman, was before the colonel on a charge of husband-beating. According to her tell, Joseph, "her better half," was not much good, but she promised to punish him less in future and got off on a suspended sentence.

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